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# ARISTODEMUS:

A Tragedy,

1811.

Printed by J. JOHNSON,

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*By John Bullock.*









ARISTODEMUS:

*A Tragedy.*

## ADVERTISEMENT.

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A perusal of the *Aristodemo* of Monti, first suggested to the Author of the Tragedy now diffidently offered to the public, that by taking up the story at a different period, the same Hero might be made the subject of a dramatic attempt more in accordance with the genius of the British Stage. It is nevertheless humbly hoped, that nothing will be found that can entitle the present work to be considered an imitation of that elegant production. The obscurity that envelopes the history of the period treated of, may probably be esteemed a justification of the liberties taken in the construction of the plot.

# ARISTODEMUS:

**A Tragedy.**

Jacta est alea !

---

Muchos van por lana y vuelven trasquilados.

---

Contre fortune bon cœur !

**EDINBURGH:**

**WILLIAM TAIT, 78 PRINCE'S STREET;  
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## DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

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ARISTODEMUS, *a Messenian General.*

MARDONIUS, *his Friend.*

PALÆMON, *a Prince of the Royal Race.*

DION and NEARCHUS, *Citizens.*

A BEGGAR.

ALCANDER, EUMÆUS, and CREONTES, *Spartan  
Ambassadors.*

*Priests, Citizens, Heralds, and Messengers, &c.*

LAON and MEDON, *Spartan Officers.*

*Troops of both Parties.*

LAODAMIA, *Wife to Aristodemus.*

ALTHÆA, *their Daughter.*

CORYSAND.

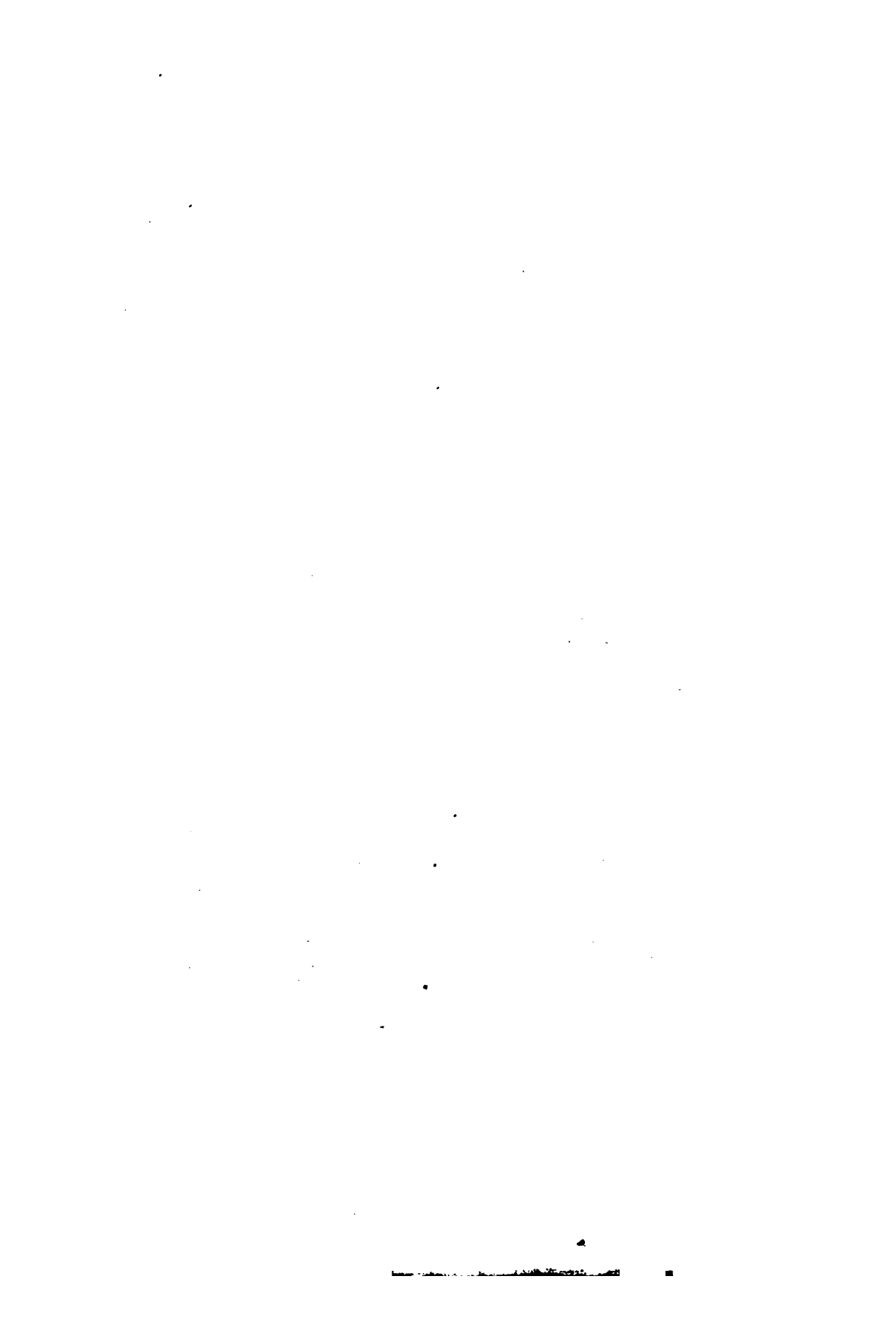
LUCIA.

PHOCIA.

*Attendants, &c.*

---

*The Scene lies in Messenia, in the Peloponnesus.*



# ARISTODEMUS.

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## ACT I.

SCENE I. — *A Street in Messenia.* — DION and  
NEARCHUS *meeting.*

NE. Whither away, good Dion? Whither now?  
What, not a word to greet a friend?

DI. Pass, man;  
And speak not to me. Call upon the Gods,  
Not me.

NE. You're crabbed; what is it ails you now?

DI. Why, who are you that ask? Art so thick-hided  
That nothing galls thee? Look to't! You'll not  
'scape.

NE. Nay, I can wait; but, prithee, what new sorrow  
Hath chafed you to this humour?

DI. There's none new.  
All sorrow's old; and being so, should blunt  
It's edge — but 'twill not; — Drusa's dead.

NE. That lovely child! Sure, 'twas but yesternorn  
I passed your door, and saw, e'en thro' her veil,  
The sparkling jet of her bright eye that laughed me  
Welcome.



- DI. / So soon is evil done ; and thus,  
Does one dark tempest blast the hope we've nursed  
For years ! We die like sheep o' the rot : one hour,  
Upon the earth — the next, the earth on us.
- NE. Too true, alas ! — We are indeed beset  
With many evils ; on our poor Messenia,  
Their plagues the gods have multiplied. Grim war  
Has drank our bravest blood ; and the parched fields  
Deny their increase ; whilst this creeping pest  
Blasts youth and beauty by our hearths. 'Tis  
fearful !
- DI. Would that the bolt had fallen on me ! — Just Gods !  
Why should the hungry pestilence devour  
The young, the loved, and spare this withered  
trunk ?  
But I shall follow, girl ! Famine and grief  
Will send me after thee ere scarce thou'rt cold ;  
Or, may be, Spartan swords.
- NE. In sooth, I'm sorry  
For the fair child.
- DI. Be rather glad for *her*.  
What's left to live for ? Better die o' the plague  
Than starve. Who'd be a father now ? Or why  
Should women teem, when the ungenial earth  
Denies her orphans bread.  
(*Enter an Old Man, begging.*)
- O.M. Some charity, good gentlemen ! A drachma  
For pity's sake ! I faint for want of food.
- DI. So do we all. Avaunt ! The man is struck  
By the pest ; I see it in his face. Begone,  
I say ! Pity is dead ; and Charity  
Hath not wherewith to feed herself.

O. M.

Alas !

Good Sirs, my very children drive me off —  
Must I die here upon the street ?

DI.

Aye, must you ;

Blest in the expedition of your fate.

NE. Take that ; it is not much. (*Gives money.*)

O. M.

Enough ! Enough !

'Twill furnish my short span. Lodging no man  
Will give me ; but with this I'll buy me wine —  
And drinking, drinking, die ! [*Exit.*

NE.

Methinks, your own

Mishap should make you pitiful ; but we're  
So differently compounded, what melts one  
But makes another harder.—Hark ! what shouts  
Are those ?

DI.

News from the wars, most like.

NE.

Rather from Delphi. The envoys we sent  
To learn the oracle, returned this morning,  
And to the priests and archons have delivered  
The great Apollo's answer. Let us hope  
Some gentle expiation has been found  
For our transgressions ; and by holy rites  
Appeased, the gods will lay their anger down,  
And let us live again.

DI.

Those who yet live

May hope such mercy — but the heavenly pity  
Will not restore my child !

NE.

Here come the heralds ;

And with them troops of citizens.

SCENE II.—*Enter Citizens.*

1st *Cit.* The oracle ! The oracle ! The heralds  
Are coming to declare it here forthwith.

2d *C.* Have any heard it yet ?

3d *C.* I have.

2d *C.* What says it ?

3d *C.* That all the royal family be slain,  
And then shall health and peace and plenty reign.

2d *C.* An excellent prescription. Hail Apollo !  
Ever the people's friend !

4th *C.* But 'tis not so.

I heard, the women only shall be slain.

5th *C.* Not all the women ; only one, I heard.

1st *C.* That's merciful, however. See, who comes !

(*Enter a Herald and Citizens.*)

*Her.* Silence, good friends !

*Omnes.* Silence ! the herald speaks.

*Her.* I am commanded by the priests and archons,  
Throughout the city to proclaim the answer  
Which great Apollo, to our supplications,  
Has by the Pythia rendered. Peace, and hear it !

*Om.* Read it !—Peace ! Silence ! Let us hear !

*Her.* Then thus it runs.

“ Till of your royal race a blooming maid  
On Pluto's altar shall be bleeding laid,  
Famine and plague shall ravage hand in hand,  
And join with Spartan arms to devastate the land.”

*Dr.* Now the just gods speak clearly, and choose few  
But precious victims ; hurling their dread thunder  
Against proud palaces — the lowly cottage

Spared.— Had this oracle but spoken sooner,  
I still had had a child !

*1st C.* The royal race !

How many maidens does it boast ? Let's see !

*2d C.* Maidens enough, I warrant ; fully twenty  
I'm sure I counted flaunting in the temple  
At our last festival.

*3d C.* Twenty ! not ten.

Stay now, and I will name them to you. First——

*1st C.* Pshaw ! Milo, we confess you're learned in maidens.  
But spare your pains ; their names concern us not.  
That one must die, suffices us to know.  
The question is, Who is to choose the victim ?

*Her.* That has been settled in the council. All  
The names are to be placed on the high altar,  
And, with eyes bandaged, one the priest draws out.

*1st C.* What if the victim and her friends refuse  
T' abide the lot ?

*2d C.* Why then we'll kill them all ;  
And offer up a few old fathers with them.  
The gods shall not be famished ; nor we, longer.  
'Tis just they suffer who have caused the mischief.

*NE.* Caused the mischief ?

*2d C.* Aye ; 'tis their crimes we pay for ;  
'Tis they incense the gods—the great—not we ;  
We bleed t'avenge their quarrels—not our own ;  
They drain our means to feed their own profusion,  
And furnish out the war ;— and that's not all.

*Omnes.* What more ? what more ?

*2d C.* What more ? Whence comes this sickness ?

*Omnes.* Why, from the Gods.

*2d C.* From poisoned fountains, friends.

*Omnes.* How ? How ?

2*d C.* They say, we're growing too numerous,  
And must be thinned. They fear our power, and  
would  
Be gladly rid of us.

*Omnes.* We'll be revenged!

1*st C.* I've heard of this before, but scarce believed it.

DI. Neither believe it now; nor seek to cast  
Your sins on other shoulders. True, the great  
Have vices; so have we all; differing but  
In kind, not in degree. Inspect not their's,  
But seek to mend your own.

*Her.* Peace, and disperse! Or come to my next station  
Where I may tell you more.

2*d C.* Well, shall we follow,  
And hear the rest?

3*d C.* With all my heart I'll with you.

*Citizens.* And I! And I!

1*st C.* For me, I'll home and pray.  
[*Exeunt all but DION and NEARCHUS.*]

### SCENE III.

NE. This will appal our great ones, since their greatness  
Thus makes them marks for vengeance. Let us see;  
Who are the likely victims.

DI. Might my will  
Compel the fates, the lot should fall on Doris,  
The daughter of our late good king, old Gaubrias.

NE. Fair Doris! Why choose her above the rest?

DI. She has no father to lament for her.

NE. It might be best; yet she is young and joyous.

DI. So are they all; still one must taste of death.

- NE. Then there's the grave Licinia, child of Cleon,  
With her dark eye, and priestess-seeming gait;  
Or the two daughters of Ægeon — Mysia,  
And proud Cassandra; he would still have one  
Left, any way.
- DI. So would not old Demetrius.  
Grant Heaven may turn the shaft from bright  
Chrysæa,  
Sole hope and comfort of his lonely age.
- NE. There's one — the fairest — that we've not named  
yet;  
Aristodemus' daughter, fair Althæa.  
'Twould grieve me most for young Palæmon's sake,  
Were't her; he loves her, and 'twould kill him too.  
Then for her mother, she would e'en go mad,  
As once before she did, some sixteen years  
Now passed, at losing her much cherished infant,  
In a night skirmish with the Spartan troopers.
- DI. I think I heard of that, tho' distant then,  
Upon my embassy. Yet strange it seems,  
That a poor babe, of such high lineage, too,  
Should meet so rude a death.
- NE. Alas! our city  
Was straitly leaguered, and by high command,  
All who must eat, and could not fight, were sent  
Beyond the walls, to husband our provisions.  
The mother of the babe, Laodamia,  
Being then in act to bring into the world  
Another — she we spake of, fair Althæa —  
Could not be moved. Entrusting her, therefore,  
To old Admetus — 'twas the general's friend  
And almost father — she, their firstborn hope,  
Young Marcia, was dispatched to some sure refuge.

But ere 'twas reached, fierce bands of Spartan fo-  
 rayers  
 Fell on them, and slew all; when this young child,  
 And her too weak protector, shared alike  
 The fate of that dark hour.

SCENE IV.—*Enter Citizens, shouting.*

*Cit.* Come, all away,  
 My masters! Come away! We're for the temple!

*NE.* What to do there?

*Cit.* Marry! to see the lots  
 Drawn, to be sure. Six names be on the altar,  
 All maids of royal race, yet ignorant [mothers  
 Themselves of what impends; and whilst their  
 Knowing too well, essay with trembling lips  
 To smile on them, and hide their starting tears,—  
 The prouder fathers, rigid and erect,  
 With dewy brows, contracted to a frown,  
 And lips compressed, clenched hands, and folded  
 arms,  
 Stand sternly. Lovers meantime, fierce, impetuous,  
 Distraught, blaspheme the Oracle; deny  
 The Gods; and in the self-same breath, appeal  
 To the high powers they have disowned.

*NE.* Heaven help them!

*Cit.* The lots being drawn, Aristodemus next,  
 Is to be chosen King.

*DI.* Aristodemus!  
 By what authority?

*NE.* The people's votes.  
 'Tis certain he has most.

- DI. I never gave  
Him mine, nor will.
- NE. Howbeit, he has earned  
Our voices hardly.
- DI. Oh yes, he's a soldier;  
One that gives largess, gets up petty triumphs,  
And cares for nothing but his own advancement.  
I stand for Cleon — he, that never courted  
Pop'larity, nor doffed his hat to rogues  
Nor fools, to win their favour, — nor e'er thought  
Of glory for himself, but for his country.
- Cit. Cleon's not bad, but t' other's a tried soldier.
- NE. In such a time as this, our King should be one,  
And popular withal, to draw the people  
To these disastrous wars. Aristodemus  
Shall therefore have my voice. Howbeit, most like  
He will refuse. He has declared, of late,  
Domestic joys grow dearer, the full flush  
Of youth being passed; rather avoids, than seeks,  
The offices are forced on his acceptance.
- DI. Who? He refuse! Small fear of that, I ween;  
His very soul's ambition. Sir, he's one,  
Tho' not devoid of natural affections,  
Whilst chiming to the tune of his preferment,  
Who at the first discord would wrench the strings  
That made the harmony, and scatter them  
Unto the winds.
- NE. You judge him too severely.  
He never asked our voices; and 'tis certain  
That to the deputations who have urged him,  
He gave most grave denial. I was told,  
The more they prayed, the firmer he refused.
- DI. Coyness to quicken courtship. So do maids  
Let men steal kisses. Mark me, and remember;



I know him well. Would I were half as sure  
Of Cleon's fortune, as of t'other's wishes.  
Come, shall we go, and watch the game he plays?

NE. With all my heart; altho' this fatal lottery  
Will make it sorry sport. Fall where it may,  
I cannot choose but grieve.

DI. Their noble bloods  
Are not immortal; they must die, like us.  
My Drusa was as fair, as tho' she'd drawn  
Her being from a hundred kings, and yet,  
She's dead. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE V.—*Apartment in the house of Aristodemus.*  
—*Enter precipitately LAODAMIA, who traverses the*  
*stage impatiently, followed by PHOCIA.*

LAO. Tell me not, Phocia, tell me not! What surety  
Have I, my daughter's name will not be drawn?

PHO. Nay, good my lady, 'tis the time to sorrow  
When the worst falls on us.

LAO. Before, good Phocia!  
Evils we meet fly from us; and the shocks  
That shake us most, surprise us from the rear.  
What day o' the month is this?

PHO. I think, the seventh.

LAO. A day most fatal to our house! I've weighed  
These things too lightly; now they strike me home.

PHO. Alas! and I, unhappy that I am,  
Thrust in contrary shoes my heedless feet,  
Taking the left for right: 'tis very ominous!

LAO. By what offences have we earned this judgment!—  
Methought I bid you fetch my lord?

PHO. My lord

Went forth but now.

LAO. Speed then, and call him back.

Stay—no; one half this sorrow's his already;  
Let me bear mine. Alas! I'm tempest tost,  
And my unruddered will, heaved to and fro  
On passion's waves, can make no port. Hark,  
Phocia,

Go, call Mardonius here. [Exit PHOCIA.

Oh, angry Gods!

Will nought appease ye but our children's blood?  
Methinks, if blood will do't, enough, ere now,  
Hath been poured out to soak the stubborn earth.  
The pastures should be rank, and the full sheaves,  
Bowed down, should kiss the soil that nurtures them.  
The luscious olive, and the purple grape,  
Should burst, ere harvested, their silken sheaths,  
Returning their rich juices to the earth.  
But, no! 'T must be extracted from our hearts,  
Our very heart of hearts—the holiest fountain,  
The dearest, in the temple of our loves!  
'Tis wondrous strange! If there be Gods above us,  
They should be kind.

(Enter MARDONIUS.)

How now, Mardonius! what's the news?

MAR. There's none,

But that I brought—the answer from the Pythia.

LAO. Ill news, ill answer. Oh, good friend! my soul  
Is sick with terror.

MAR. You despond too soon;

Let's hope the best.

LAO. 'Twere wiser to despair.

Hope's but a flatterer, whose honeyed lies  
Do make the truth more bitter.

MAR. Of six names  
Are in the urn, one only can touch you.

LAO. But, Oh, that one, Mardonius! 'Tis my life,  
My breath, my being! Wound me but in that,  
And I am gone! How silent are the streets!  
All to the temple but our wretched selves.  
Ere this they might be back. What hour is't?

MAR. 'Tis no time yet. They've scarcely reached the  
shrine.

LAO. I'd have the minutes fly and lag at once.  
Too swift they are for my despair, too slow  
For hope. For hope! alas, I've none! I see  
No light; the darkness of my fear o'ershadows  
Every hope, veiling each possible future  
But the worst. Horrible presentiments  
Hang round, and drag me so heavily down,  
That I shall sink ere aid can come to me;  
And like the criminal too late reprieved,  
Shall die, unstruck, from fantasy alone.

MAR. The Gods have still been friendly to my lord;  
They'll not forsake him now.

LAO. Where is my lord?

MAR. Gone to the temple, as I think, to learn  
The issue.

LAO. Can he stand by and see it!

MAR. The election of a King will follow next;  
So 'tis believed. 'Twere fit my lord be there,  
On whom, past doubt, the choice will fall.

LAO. Heaven knows!  
Their loves unstable he has toiled to win,  
Far, far beyond their price; soon won, soon lost;  
Not worth the seeking. Hark! what stir is that?

I think they come this way.—that's strange! But  
no;

They take the other—that portends no good.

MAR. 'Tis nothing but your o'erstrained ears conceiving  
Sounds that are not.

LAO. Oh! this poor heart of mine!—  
Aye, Sir, my lord, howe'er he seems, would fain  
Be King.

MAR. And justly, for his country's need,  
No less than his own honour. We're distracted  
As much by discontent at home, as wars  
Abroad. The breath that should bespent in prayer,  
The angry populace bestow in curses.

LAO. Hush! no! Send Marsias, Phocia, to the temple:  
Bid him fly thither—he is swift of foot—  
And then return as quick; instruct him—you;  
I cannot speak what I would learn—begone!

[*Exit PHOCIA.*]

MAR. Would you not, Madam, choose to be a Queen?

LAO. Oh, good Mardonius, I am but a mother,  
And cannot queen it now!

SCENE VI.—*Enter PALÆMON and ALTHÆA.*

ALTHÆA. Oh! my sweet mother,  
I have been seeking you. Beshrew me, but  
Palæmon here, false suitor that he is,  
Said, with my father you were gone abroad,  
Commanding that I should not leave the house.

LAO. And so I did. Go not, I pray you, forth;  
The air's pestiferous.—(*To PALÆMON*) She no-  
thing knows?

PAL. Nothing ; for I have watched fast by her side,  
Lest some untimely tongue should speak the wo.

LAO. No, my sweet daughter, stay by me—my child,  
My pretty rose—my own Althæa !

AL. My birthday, dearest mother, is to-morrow ;  
And I have sixteen years of love unmatched,  
To bless you for—thereon I have a boon  
To crave.

LAO. Not now—not now—some other time.—  
I must away, or else these tears will choke me.—  
I will be with thee straight again, dear love.—  
Mardonius, come with me.—But one fond kiss—  
(*Kisses her.*)

Oh, Juno, mother of the Gods, assist me!

[*Exit with MARDONIUS.*]

## SCENE VII.

AL. What ails my mother?

PAL. (*Aside*) Most blessed ignorance!—  
O'erwrought with many cares she is, which reach  
not

Confiding youth. Age looks beyond the present,  
Fore-living sorrows in foreboding fears.

AL. Why, what hath she to fear, to blanch her cheek,  
And vex her to such passion?

PAL. When bolts are hurling through the air, each dives  
His head, uncertain where 'twill strike.

AL. Perhaps 'tis  
My father that's amiss?

PAL. All is amiss.

AL. Not you, I hope, Palæmon!

PAL. None are exempt. Each in the general wo  
Doth bear a part, and most of us are cursed  
With some peculiar grief that chafes us nearer.

AL. If such you have—and now I look again,  
I see it in your face—yield me my part.  
I am your wife, wanting but some few weeks;  
And 'tis my privilege to share with you.

PAL. And so you shall, when once the blessed day  
Shall dawn, that makes you mine.

AL. Do I hear right?  
And is't Palæmon that withholds his faith  
On such a nicety? Nay, then, I'm schooled,  
I see myself. All, all I gave—my thoughts,  
My joys, my griefs; kept nothing back, that I  
With honour could impart. I've been too liberal,  
And blush to learn my fault.

PAL. Chide not, my sweet;  
But bear with me. Believe, though each did shine  
A world as fair as this, I'd share with thee  
The gems that gild the curtain of the night,  
Were they but mine to give.

AL. How like a thrifty giver 'tis, to stint  
The humble boon we ask, vowing great largess  
Upon impossible conditions!

PAL. How like  
A woman 'tis, to ask the thing's denied!

AL. I sought but what I dreamed mine own—your  
thoughts.

PAL. That they are wholly thine, witness the gods!  
And if for me they've any good reserved,  
I ask but such as may be shared with thee,  
All else being tasteless. If a grief I had—  
I speak but on condition, not admitting

That I have—trust me, sweet, 'twould make it sadder,

The seeing it reflected from those eyes,  
Whose brightness is the sun that gives me comfort.  
Therefore, no more but this—(*Kisses her*)—a  
balm most sovereign

'Gainst sorrow's sting. — (*Aside*) How hard 'tis  
to dissemble!

AL. Well, I am tutored, and must cry 'content,'  
Learning obedience whilst rebellion's free,  
To make allegiance easier when compelled.  
Perhaps time may show me worthy of your trust.  
Howbe't, my country's griefs, Heaven knows, I  
feel them!

And if my tears could ransom her, or e'en  
My blood, I'd shed it freely.

PAL. Oh ye Gods!

AL. What now?

PAL. 'Twas nothing but a pang shot thro' my heart.

AL. 'Tis these sad thoughts; we'll banish them, and  
tune

To merrier measures our discourse. — Cheer up,  
My lord! And now divine; I know a secret.

PAL. Indeed! What is't?

AL. You should not have been told

To-day; but now, being sad, I give it you,  
As medicine for the grief you'll not disclose.  
My father hath relented, and the weeks  
Dividing us are melted into days.  
We wed o' Thursday.

PAL. Hush! Silence! Methought  
I heard a shout.

AL. I heard no sound. — As usual,

'Twas my dear mother's prayers prevailed in this,  
As in all else that's friendly to our courtship.

PAL. Poor soul ! Poor soul !

AL. Glad soul, I think, Palæmon ;  
For 'twas a marriage of her own contriving.  
You know she loves you, and so does my father ;  
But for my father's daughter, I'll not swear  
So much. But, pshaw ! I prattle to the air ;  
Palæmon heeds me not.

PAL. Indeed, I'm heavy,  
And have not the alacrity I should.  
May be, to-morrow's sun shall find me better —  
The great gods grant it !

AL. If you're ill indeed,  
I say, Amen ! *( Shouts are heard. )*

PAL. Hush ! Hush ! Now, then, they come !  
Was that a cry i' the house ?

AL. I heard nothing ;  
Only the rabble shouting. Come, cheer up !  
Be sure 'tis some good news.

PAL. Or bad — or bad !

AL. Good sooth, you're very pale. Why, how you  
shake !

Is't fear ? I fear to see you, tho' I know  
No cause. Come in ; I'll lead you to my mother.

PAL. No — no ; be still, be still !

AL. Good luck ! what is't ?

PAL. 'Tis life or death.

*( Enter LAODAMIA, precipitately. )*

LAO. Down with me to the earth,  
And thank the Gods, for we are spared !

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## ACT II.

SCENE I. — *Apartment in the House of Aristodemus. — Enter ARISTODEMUS, thoughtfully — MARDONIUS following.*

ARIS. And so, Demetrius is elected King ?

MAR. The multitude, I hear, will have it so.

ARIS. Inconstant fools ! I never thought they loved him.

MAR. 'Tis Pity, more than Love. The lot being drawn,  
That fell upon his daughter, when the name  
Of young Chrysæa, on the rabble's shouts  
Was borne, to where the father, kneeling 'fore  
The tomb of his dead wife, besought the gods  
To spare this tender blossom of their loves, —  
Erect he started from the earth, and mouth  
And eyes apart, transfixed he stood, and cheeks  
And lips so bloodless, that the sculptured mother  
On the cold monument looked scarce more marble  
Than did he, — till, sudden, as by an arrow  
Struck in the very seat of life, he fell  
Prone to the earth, to his best lover's hopes,  
Appearing gone, the herald of his daughter.

ARIS. But he revived ?

MAR. He did.

She, the young maid Chrysæa, who had heard  
The people shout, unknowing of the cause —  
For still they cried, " Demetrius shall be King !"  
Broke from her women, and with flushing cheeks,  
And eyes — if stars were of cerulean blue,  
They'd shine so — and long golden hair that swept

Her snowy neck, rushed in ; and when she saw  
Her father on the earth, dead, to all thinking,  
There broke from her young breast a cry so shrill,  
That sleeping soldiers, on their watch surprised,  
Start not more sudden at their captain's call,  
Than waked up he ; and then he fell to tears,  
And sobs ; planting thick kisses on her brow,  
Parting with trembling hands her sunny locks,  
And gazed with eyes where grief and love contended,  
On her infantile beauty, that his soul  
Seemed melting in the strife. Whilst she, who  
thought

'Twas sudden joy had struck him down, stood  
weeping,

Smiling, and wiping with her golden hair  
His bleared and grizzled face ; till he, o'erwrought,  
And urged to frenzy, caught her in his arms,  
And, like a baited lion with his cub,  
Broke from the throng ; whilst still the people cried,  
“ Long live Demetrius ! Demetrius shall be King ! ”

ARIS. 'Twas the next way to catch them.

MAR. Sir, indeed,

All men were moved.

ARIS. He's old ; the autumn of his days is past.

MAR. 'Tis certain he's in years, and most like 'tis,  
He will not hold it long.

ARIS. That follows not.

Old men live long ; they're chary of the life  
The younger squander. Life is their dear treasure,  
More worthless, more esteemed. The gallant'st  
youth

Would dastard turn, and fly one half the ills,



ARIS. Urge me no more ;  
I cannot come.

LAO. Why, now, I see you're sick.

ARIS. By no means ; 'tis my humour. Leave me, pray !

LAO. 'Tis strange that we be so contrary humoured.  
But yesternorn 'twas I was sad ; and now,  
'Tis you. The stranger, that I see no cause.  
Well, men are men. — (*To MARDONIUS*) How  
now, good friend ? What news ?

MAR. The newest is the worst. The fickle people  
Will have Demetrius for their King.

LAO. Indeed !  
Is't so ? Why, then, 'tis that hath spoilt my lord  
For this day's merriment. But, by my troth !  
I did not look to see Demetrius King.

ARIS. Why not ? They'd have him god, if gods were coined  
By breath.

LAO. In sooth, I'm sorry, dear my lord ;  
But 'tis beneath your nobleness to chafe.  
Your deeds shall live—your history be blazoned,  
When from the earth, and from all earthly records,  
Demetrius and his name have passed away.  
Alas ! 'tis most-like pity, for his grief  
Hath stirred them to't.

(*Enter ALTHÆA.*)

Look here, my Lord, on this !  
I dare be sworn, you would not barter such  
A jewel for a crown.

ARIS. What make you here,  
Althæa ? Keep you to your chamber rather,  
And with your women learn to ply the wheel.  
Come not henceforth before the hall till called for ;  
Maidens should not be prodigally seen.

L<sup>AO</sup>. Chide not her freedom now, my lord; 'twas you  
Yourself that gave it. Sure, 'tis most unhandsome  
'To wrangle with sharp words your own indulgence.

AR<sup>IS</sup>. Mardonius!

M<sup>AR</sup>. Aye, my Lord.

AR<sup>IS</sup>. (*To himself*) What if I were?  
"I would madden them.

AL<sup>..</sup>. Mother, shall I begone?

L<sup>AO</sup>. No, child.

AL<sup>..</sup>. What hath disquieted my father?

L<sup>AO</sup>. 'Tis but a humour which will pass anon;  
'Take no note on't. They've made Demetrius King.

AL<sup>..</sup>. What comfort's that to him? Alas! poor man!  
My pretty playmate, too — my sweet Chryseæ!  
I scarce can gladden at mine own escape,  
Lamenting so for them. Good faith! methinks,  
"Twere better toil beneath the sun all day,  
And sleep o' nights upon the dewy earth,  
As lowly maidens do, than in our veins  
The precious blood of Kings to bear, that e'en  
The Gods do covet.

AR<sup>IS</sup>. (*To himself*) I'll do it! — Mardonius!

M<sup>AR</sup>. My Lord?

AR<sup>IS</sup>. I throw up my command, Mardonius.  
I go not to the war.

M<sup>AR</sup>. My Lord!!

AR<sup>IS</sup>. I have bethought, and see 'tis what they'd have.  
I do but render that, which being untendered,  
They will reclaim.

M<sup>AR</sup>. You wrong yourself to think it.  
Never! Can they forget, but for your arm,  
And warlike counsel, that Messenia's tribute  
Were still to Sparta paid, and they her slaves?

ARIS. You'd flatter me, Mardonius ! A mere soldier  
I ; one that, may be, hath done some small service,  
I'll not deny't. But what of that ? You see,  
It is not of such stuff that kings are made.

MAR. You've never wanted their good will till now.

ARIS. The rabble, Sir, have this distemperature :  
They weary most, of them that serve them best ;  
They sicken at the greatness they have helped  
To make ; — being well, they think themselves  
diseased ;  
Physic with novelty their restless humours,  
And tho' by the purgation they're full oft  
Endangered, e'en to death, they're never cured  
Of the conceit.

MAR. I'm satisfied e'en now ——

ARIS. 'Tis true, I beat the Spartans at Deræa ;  
Shook off the yoke, that forty bitter years  
Of servitude had furrowed in the neck  
Of bowed Messenia ; certes, it was done  
O' the antique fashion — for we gave and took  
Hard knocks. Some died ; and many brought off  
wounds  
That rankling in their sides, remind them still  
Laconian spears are tranchant as their words.  
But these are toys ! A great philosopher  
Is this Demetrius, fraught with curious learning.  
Anon, you'll see, he shall compound a nostrum  
To cure the plague withal.

MAR. Yet hath he been  
A warrior in his day, and a brave one.  
Ten years exemption from Laconian bonds,  
Messenia owes to him. So long, i' the flower  
Of youth, he fought them off. Nor can I doubt,

Discretion, judgment, counsel, still remain,  
 The riper for his years ; most fit to govern,  
 Tho', haply, not to lead.

ARIS.                                You'd have him fight  
 The Spartans from his closet ; cry, *do this* —  
 And I shall do it ; trace out on a card  
 The plan of a campaign, which I, obedient,  
 As his lieutenant shall fulfil — being arm  
 To his contriving head.

MAR.                                My Lord, I said  
 Not so.

ARIS.                                No, but you thought it, Sir.

MAR.                                My Lord,  
 'Twas of my country, of Messenia, that  
 I thought. Each man cannot be highest ; and he,  
 Who having worthiness to lead, consents  
 To follow for his country's sake,  
 Shows a true nobleness, that doth approve  
 Him first in all men's minds.

(ARIS. and MAR. *speak apart.*)

AL.    Dear mother, I beseech you, urge my father !  
 Compel me not unwilling to the temple !  
 Palæmon being away to bid his kinsmen  
 Here to our bridal, I'd especially  
 Not go.

LAO.                                No more ; you see he's roughed already ;  
 It would but anger him. Usage commands  
 Your presence with the maidens of your race.  
 It were not fortunate to stay behind.  
 The season's critical — we must not tempt  
 The fates. Come, 'tis the hour ; let us prepare.

AL.    Fain would I not, but must, since you'll not yield.

[*Exeunt* LAO. and ALTHÆA.]

ARIS. No matter ; I'm resolved. Let him who o'er  
Messenia reigns, defend her. I will be  
No man's weapon ; soldier no more, nor battle,  
Nor counsel, shall they have from me. Hear this,  
Mardonius : Not the bauble of a crown  
Prize I ; more virtue hath my honest sword,  
Than twenty golden sceptres ! 'Tis their hearts —  
Their thankless hearts. I, that was late their god !  
That 'tis that galls me. — Come, let us away !

MAR. Once more, bethink you, dear my lord ! do not  
Rashly betray your glory to your passion.  
Twice you have had their voices for the throne.  
They're haply not so much to blame. You said  
That you'd have none on't — nay, that you had  
rather  
Conduct them as their general and comrade  
To the field, than be raised above your fellows ;  
You said —

ARIS. I said, Mardonius ! I said ! Why,  
What matters what I said ? They're thankless  
debtors,  
That being excused awhile their just enthrallment,  
Squander unhandsomely my hard-earned dues,  
To feed fantastic humours. — Say no more.  
Their will shall be their scourge ; Demetrius *shall*  
Be king — commander — all that they can make  
him.  
Aristodemus they can never make him ;  
Look they to that ! [Exeunt.]



SCENE III. — *The interior of a Temple, with an Altar. Enter a Procession, with Music, Priests, Priestesses, Nobles, Soldiers, the Five Maidens of the Royal Race dressed alike, &c. — They march round the Stage — then dividing, range themselves on each side, whilst the Priests and Priestesses chant the Addresses to the Gods in succession.*

*Priests of Apollo.*

To Pluto's shrine, at thy behest,  
 Oh ! son of Jove, thy servant brings,  
 To purchase for her country rest,  
 The Daughter of a hundred Kings.  
 Let not the victim die in vain !  
 Delphian Apollo, ease our pain !  
 Let rosy health smile o'er the land,  
 And walk with plenty hand in hand.  
 Give virtue to the sparkling fountains ;  
 Send wholesome breezes from the mountains ;  
 Stretch forth thine arm, and let us live ;  
 Our sickness heal, our sins forgive !

*Omnes.*

Oh ! grant the blood we shed this day,  
 Wash all our ills and sins away !

*Priests of Mars.*

Stern God of War ! to thee we pay  
 Our homage in this holy rite !  
 Let the oblation made this day,  
 Obtain thy favour in the fight.  
 Lead us thyself to meet the foe,  
 A pluméd warrior in the van ;

Or hovering o'er us as we go,  
With victory's wings our valour fan.  
Be thy arm with us in the fray,  
For her blessed sake that dies to-day !

*Omnes.*

Oh ! grant the blood we shed this day,  
Wash all our ills and sins away !

*Priests of Ceres.*

Oh ! fruitful Mother ! hear our cry !  
Nor let the stubborn earth deny  
To yield to our unceasing toil,  
The timely tribute of the soil :  
The wavy corn, the purple vine,  
Rich pastures meet to feed the kine.  
Let honey-bees on thyme-banks sport,  
And acorns drop where swine resort ;  
Let quivering olives bending low,  
Give back the seed we did not sow ;  
Let their charged branches sweep the ground,  
And strew their luscious fruits around ;  
Whilst fleecy ewes, with tender care,  
Lead milk-white lambs to pasture there !

*Omnes.*

Oh ! grant the blood we shed this day,  
Wash all our ills and sins away !

*Priests of Pluto.*

Pluto ! dark King, avenging God !  
Whose mirky regions late have trod  
Too many souls, untimely freed,  
Let not this victim vainly bleed !  
Relent, and let our misery move  
The pity that was moved by love !

*Omnes.*

Oh ! grant the blood we shed this day,  
Wash all our ills and sins away !

*(As the chorus concludes, a Priest enters  
precipitately from behind the altar, and  
stands in the centre —)*

*Priest.* Silence, ye men foredoomed ! Silence ! and hush  
Your ineffectual prayer ! — Our rite's profaned !  
Our Gods defied ! Demetrius and the maid  
Have fled, and made for Sparta !

*Omnes, in a minor key.*

Oh wo ! Oh horror ! Dire despair !  
Nor hope, nor ask, nor pray, we dare.  
The very means we seized to save  
Have plunged us deeper 'neath the wave !

*Pr.* Who shall redeem us now ? What sacrifice  
Appease th' insulted Gods, and for Messenia  
Purchase pardon ? Oh miserable country !  
Betrayed by them whose glory it had been  
To die to save thee, who shall help thee now ?

*ARIS. (Seizes ALTHÆA by the arm, and advances to  
the centre —)*

Messenians, I have a daughter !

*LAO.* Aristodemus ! Hold !

*ALT.* Oh Mother ! Mother !

*LAO.* My child ! My blessed child !

*Priest.* Look to the lady.

*(The Priests prevent LAO. advancing.)*

*ARIS.* I have, I say, a daughter —

Of royal blood, of unimpeached descent,  
Of most excelling charms. Accept her, Gods !  
I give her for my country !

LAO. Monsters, stand off !

I will be heard.

*Priest.* The blessed Gods accept,  
And ratify the offering ! By my voice,  
This noble sacrifice they now approve,  
And seal this better victim for their own.  
They cannot thank a mortal : but our country  
Owes more than thanks to her Aristodemus,  
For this most glorious and heroic act.  
The Gods accept the gift — the maiden's their's !  
(*ALTHÆA, fainting, is carried by the Priests  
behind the altar.*)

LAO. She's not ! By every holy bond she's mine !  
I am her mother, Sirs ; and I do claim  
A thousand-fold a father's part in her.  
Nine months I carried her within my womb,  
Counting the hours till I beheld her face.  
Full fifteen more, she hung upon my breast,  
Drawing her life from mine.  
With more than mother's love I cherished her,  
And watched with more than mother's care. Take  
heed !  
Unratified by me, the gift's unholy,  
And the just Gods reject it.

ARIS. Lead her away !  
'Tis a stern duty ; but my country's peril  
Doth press upon my heart-strings, making them  
To home-affections dumb.

LAO. Oh ! wretch accurst !  
Wanting the very instinct of a beast !

The basest reptile crawling o' the earth,  
 Protects it's young ! Dissembling, bloody villain !  
 Your damned ambition 'tis, that puts you on.  
 Deceive the world you may—not me.— Oh, Sirs,  
 Believe him not ! He's wild, knows not himself ;  
 Intractable, transported, lost. No act  
 Can hold validity in law, the actor  
 Being distraught.

Why, are there any here — I'm sure there's not —  
 So lost to honour, as accept the gift  
 Of his estate from a delirious man ?  
 Or if, yourselves being mad, you'd ta'en the gift,  
 Who would not, being sane, haste to restore it ?  
 But if you take this madman at his word,  
 Drunk with ambition as yourselves with fear,  
 How, the distemperature past, will you  
 Restore the precious jewel you have filched ?  
 Can you breathe back the life ? — recall the rose  
 To the pale cheek ? — the ruby to the lip ?  
 Will the extinguished eye relume its fire ?  
 Or will the blood congealed, resume its course,  
 'T'appease your slow remorse ? For him — my  
 lord —

Believe me, Sirs, he is not always thus ;  
 But he hath late been strangely out of order.  
 Mardonius, here, hath seen't — I know he hath —  
 And many, too, his friends, have marvelled much.  
 Oh ! an you take him thus at worst, most basely  
 Advantaging yourselves of his distemper,  
 When once this fit is past, as sure it will,  
 He'll curse you then, as I will curse you now !

ARIS. I pray you, bear her hence.

LAO.

Oh mercy ! mercy !

Stand off, I say! Ye have the forms of men —  
Where are the hearts to match? Take me! I'm  
royal,

And I will die a thousand deaths to serve you,  
So you'll regard me now! Let me but kiss her —  
But touch her hand — but look on her, and die!  
(I'd bate my askings to the scanty measure  
Of your mercy, but oh! 'tis short of all!)  
Oh cruel, cowardly villains! — Grant, ye Gods!  
The blood they shed this day may serve t'engender  
The very ills they fear! A bloody murder,  
And not a sacrifice, they offer up;  
Pay them, oh! pay them in a like kind back!  
Their prayers reward with death, their sacrilege  
with curses! (*She is borne away.*)

*Priest.* 'Tis thus, my countrymen, Aristodemus  
Loves you!

*Omnes.* For this he shall be King! No King  
But he! Aristodemus is our King!

(*The Curtain falls whilst they cheer.*)



## ACT III.

SCENE I. — *A Hall* — ARISTODEMUS *seated on a Throne* — *Courtiers and Citizens, &c.*

*Omn.* Long live Aristodemus ! Live the King !

*1st C.* Best friend Messenia ever knew.

*2d C.* Aye, Sir,  
The saviour of his country.

*DION.* We shall see :  
She's not saved yet.

*NEAR.* 'Tis plain he loves us well ;  
And we are no less bound to him.

*DI.* No less,  
I grant ; i'faith, I'd not desire it less.

*NE.* He earned the crown as no man ever did.

*DI.* He paid for't, Sir, as no man ever did.

*Her.* Silence ! Silence !

*Omnes.* Silence ! Let's hear the King.

*ARIS.* My Lords, and dear-loved fellow-citizens,  
My only children now — since for your sakes  
I've cast away all other fathership,  
Henceforth to live but in your loves — I thank ye.  
You've placed me here, your servant ; and these  
emblems,  
Proofs of your trust and confidence, I bear  
But as remembrancers of that high duty  
That binds me ever to your service ; holding  
The tenure of my sovereignty no more  
But your good pleasures, which being once with-  
drawn,

My state falls with them, and I render back,  
As cast-off lovers should, those precious pledges.

NE. He speaks us fair.

DI. So do false gamesters, or they'd never win.

Her. Silence !

NE. Hush ! He speaks again.

ARIS. The poor deserts, that in your partial reckoning  
Have earned us these your loves, counted, I fear  
me,

By the true tale up, would shew us still your debtor  
For greater dues than we can ever hope  
To pay. But this believe, that what we've done,  
We hold as nothing ; nor shall think aught won,  
Till we've on Spartan hearths repaid the plagues  
They've lent us. Forty years of dire reverse  
To us, and victory to them, had made them  
Seem gods, nor to be conquered, nor appeased ;  
But at the Boar's Tomb, and, methinks, Deræa,  
We plucked their godships from them, and ap-  
proved them

Before the world, base counterfeits.

DI. Were all masks stript, the world might see another.

NE. Silence !

ARIS. Henceforth we meet as men to men ;  
And if from gods we have reduced them mortal,  
'Tis hard but we will bring them lower yet, —  
From men to slaves—to beasts, to carry packs,  
And trail our chariot wheels. (*The people cheer.*)  
Already, twice to Ithomæan Jove,  
A hundred victims we have offered up ;  
And, or the pith of this right arm shall fail,  
A hundred more, ere long, shall crown th' oblation !  
(*The people cheer—Enter MARDONIUS.*)  
Now, what's the news?



MAR. My Lord, the spies you sent into Arcadia  
Are returned.

ARIS. Well, and what is their report?

MAR. The King, they think, is false, the people true.  
The last would gladly arm to lend us aid,  
But Aristocrates, on one pretext  
Or t'other, keeps them back.

ARIS. He's sold — corrupted by Laconian gold.  
I thought as much; but knowing it, is better.  
Such are allies! I never trusted them,  
Nor will. 'Twixt us of Greece, we're all too near  
To be sincere; hot rivals, but cold friends;  
Rejoicing at a breach in neighbouring walls,  
Unmindful 'tis a passage to our own.  
No matter; we shall fight the better for't.  
Th' indignant swelling of our hearts will nerve  
Our arms to lustier blows.

(*Enter Messenger.*)

Well, Sir, this haste  
Should be the prelude to some stirring tale, —  
What is't?

Mess. My Lord, there's news come in. The Spartans  
In arms are making straight towards Ithome.

ARIS. So much the better: I'm glad on't. They break  
The truce themselves proposed, and win the Gods  
For us. They think us unprepared: we'll show  
them.

Summon the captains! Let the word go forth!  
For you, my friends, let each man seek his post.  
Ourself will to Ithome —

You, Philocles, be our vicegerent here,  
And hold unslacked the curb of civil rule,  
Whilst we are at the wars. Mardonius, listen!

Remember you've a charge—you know what 'tis.  
(*Whispers*) Look to my wife. [*Exit* MARD.]

Hark ye, my gallant Cleon!  
Assemble straight the men that call you Captain,  
And them besides that Philocles commands—  
He stays behind—and with them make for Sparta;  
Shew a bold battle front, with clang of arms,  
Braying of loud instruments, and such parade  
Of war, as shall address their terrors homewards.  
Ægeon, you with us; look that your companies  
Be well equipped; methought they shewed but  
poorly  
When last we saw them.

(*Enter* MARDONIUS.)

Now, what more, Mardonius?  
Is this strange news confirmed?

MAR. It is, my Lord.  
The Spartans are a-field; but one's come in,  
Who tacks the addition on, that hitherward  
Their expedition tends, not to Ithome.

ARIS. Why, let them come! Have you dispatched the  
scouts?

MAR. We have, on every side.

ARIS. By Heavens! Mardonius,  
It will be dainty sport! I swear my soul  
Is on the wing to be at cuffs amongst them!  
Methinks, that being a King I'm twice a man;  
There's magic in the name; and like the cup  
Iolas sipped, it sheds into my veins  
A livelier stream; lends vigour to my frame,  
Hardens my bones, and makes my muscles firmer.  
My spirits are in air! By Heavens! my friend,  
I'm twice the man I was!

MAR.                               It is the pledge  
Of victory, my Lord; the Spartan kerns  
Shall smart the sorer for't.

(*Enter Messenger.*)

ARIS.                               Well, Sir, your news?

Mess. My Lord, our scouts are flying in, pursued;  
And country people flocking to the gates,  
The vanguard of the Spartans on their heels.

ARIS. Bring me my shield! What force does there appear?

Mess. So numerous, 'twould seem the women all  
Were men, each man a soldier.

(*Enter a Priest.*)

Priest. My Lord, Apollo's holy priest, Melanthus,  
Dispatched me here; the omens are contrary;  
He cries, *Beware!*

ARIS.                               We'll give him heed hereafter.  
Forth all! And every man that hath a sword,  
Now cast away the sheath! Come on, my comrades!

Let's see this Spartan rout, where Helots battle  
Against true men. It is your king that calls!

[*Exeunt all but ARISTODEMUS and MARDONIUS; as they are going, they are met by LAODAMIA.*]

## SCENE II.

LAO. Are you a King? For if you be, justice!  
Oh King! I cry for justice on a murderer!  
It being the King's prerogative to right  
The injured, holding straight the balance 'twixt  
The wronger and the wronged—justice, Oh King!

ARIS. Laodamia ! Wife !

LAO. Nay, noble Sir,  
You do mistake me. I'm but a poor woman —  
Indeed, most poor — that would beseech of you  
Some little justice. 'Tis 'gainst one — your Grace  
May haply know him — called Aristodemus :  
The bloody knave hath made away my daughter.  
My Lord, the villany is patent ; probe him,  
And you will find I speak the truth. He did it,  
Pitiful cut-throat that he is, for lucre.  
It was to win a silly thing — indeed,  
A mighty silly thing, a gilded toy,  
Men call a crown ;  
Which straightway with his bloody hand he  
clutched,  
And clapt upon his head !

ARIS. Fie, madam ! Fie !

LAO. Indeed, my Lord, I lie no jot in this.  
My story's true ; and for the thing he stole,  
I'll pawn my life, it will be found upon him !

MAR. Med'cine this ill with patience, dear my lady !

LAO. And so I will, when I have justice on  
This caitiff.

ARIS. Nay, sweet wife !

LAO. Wife me no wife ! I'd's lief you call me strumpet.  
He that doth husband me, should be the father  
To my children — that can't be you ! I think,  
Upon my soul, sometime in madness or  
Perplexéd sleep, I've wandered from your bed,  
And played you false. It must be so ! How else  
Should it bechance, that where I built for comfort,  
Where in my latter days I looked to find  
Content and peace, e'en there my grief should  
spring ?

That in the very storehouse of my joys,  
The ruthless serpent should be hatched, that stings  
me ?

A father ! Gods ! The jewel of his brow !  
The lovely lily growing on his breast !  
The bird that sheltered there ! Oh wretched pair !  
O'erthrown's the garner where our loves were stored,  
The loves and hopes that should have graced our  
lives,  
And soothed our timely deaths.

ARIS. Madam, the Spartans  
Are a-field—e'en upon us now. Pray choose,  
For this unseemly part, some better season.

LAO. All seasons I will choose ; I'll wake you with't  
By night ; by day I'll starve you with't. 'T shall be  
The 'larum bell to startle, when I see  
You nod, all drowsy slumbers from you ! Aye,  
You shall keep watch with me,—I cannot sleep !

ARIS. Mardonius, speak to her—persuade her hence.

LAO. Stand off, Mardonius ! I will not go hence ;  
Nor ever that he bids me, will I do.  
Th' allegiance that I swore, I here forswear,  
And to revenge I vow myself till death.  
'Twill not be long, for life's unseated *here* ;  
And but I live for vengeance, I would scorn  
To taste the miserable dregs ; but with  
My sorrows, I would fling them in the grave.  
Something I'll do ; what 'tis, I know not yet ;  
But there's a devil at my heart that whispers me,  
To bide his time !

(*Enter a Messenger hastily.*)

Mess. My noble lord, the Spartans  
Are upon us, and the cry is for the King !

The legions are disheartened, and the captains  
Amazed. No man will stir till you appear  
To lead them on.

ARIS. By Heavens! this raving woman  
Will lose Messenia! Set up my war-cry!  
Sound! sound to arms! The King is in the field!

LAO. Stay! hear me first! And oh! avenging Gods!  
Teach me the way to curse him! But what needs?  
One curse alone I'll ask—Curse him, ye Gods,  
With memory! Leave him but that, and I  
All other maledictions will revoke!  
His path with hourly images beset,  
Of pure delights once blest his cheerful home;  
The smiles of welcome; sympathy that shared  
His joys and griefs; th' unbroken sleep, which he  
Shall taste no more! Holy affections, making  
The roof that harbours them more near to heaven  
Than earth. All crushed and melted now, and  
bartered

For hollow state, that even as he treads,  
Shall treacherously sink beneath his feet;  
And unsubstantial loves, that when he needs  
Them most, shall fall away, and leave him lonely!

ARIS. Away! I'll hear no more! There's not a word  
But plucks some manhood from me! Away! Bear  
her,

Mardonius, to her chamber, lest she howl  
Her curses in the people's ears! My soldiers,  
I come! The King! Messenia, and the King!

[Exit.

## SCENE III.

LAO. (*Laughing bitterly*) Did he not say I'd cursed  
away his manhood?

MAR. Madam, indeed your words were aspic's teeth.  
But great as is your cause of grief——

LAO. Oh bitter!  
Most bitter! Most unmatchable and cruel!

MAR. Still, for your country's sake, whose present safety  
Is in your royal husband's keeping——

LAO. Beware, Mardonius, lest I curse that too!  
My mighty wo doth make me prophet-like;  
That which I curse, shall be accurst! Beware,  
Lest in my extacy, I maledictions  
Do vomit forth, to blast with barrenness  
The genial soil—freeze up the wholesome blood  
Of youth—untimely wither in the womb  
It's fruit—and make, of these now peopled streets,  
A stage, for Desolation's self to range in!

MAR. But since this passion's vain—since 'tis an ill  
No art can cure, no magic can redeem——

LAO. Aye, there it is, Mardonius—there it is!  
Never! never! never! So young! so fair!  
So joyous too! D'you mind her bright face now?

MAR. You do but nurse your grief to handle 't thus.

LAO. I see her—see her now, just as she looked  
That happy day I won her father's word  
To give her to Palæmon—blushing, smiling,  
Weeping; and then she threw her snowy arms  
About my neck, and cried, “Oh, my sweet mother!  
What a blest creature am I in your love!”—  
And so she was a blessed creature, whilst  
She lived!

MAR. She was indeed, Madam !

LAO. She knew no sorrow but her father's wrath ;  
And that was rare ; and when it was, I came  
Between, and sheltered her.

MAR. Let that remembrance be your comfort now.

LAO. No, friend—no comfort's left for me. They've nipt  
Her pretty life, in e'en its earliest bloom ;  
Dammed up the silvery stream that sparkled late  
So bright in sunny joyousness ! Alas !  
Mardonius, 'twas my all ! my all on earth ! (*weeps.*)

MAR. Dear Madam, let me lead you to your chamber.

LAO. I will, Mardonius ; I'd not anger you.  
You loved her, and I think you pity me.  
Sometimes I would be pitied — when I would,  
I'll come to you. — Well, I must to my chamber.  
Where else can I now ? I've no place but there.  
Lonely, quite lonely ! Once there was a time —  
Oh ! is there no forgetting ?—Come, Mardonius,  
Lead me away ! [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE IV. — *A rural Scene — in the back ground,  
a small House, and a Fountain.* — PALÆMON enters,  
and taking off his Helmet, seats himself beneath a  
tree.

PAL. I'm strangely weary ! Would that I could find  
Some kindly soul to give me but a cup  
Of water ! These Lacedemonian devils  
Had nigh o'er mastered us ; but for this time,  
I think, we've scotched them. I am glad of it !  
I am not now the soldier that I was :  
It is the mind adjusts the body's temper,



And she attunes it to her proper pitch.  
 Alas ! my princess, my most sweet Althæa !  
 Since thou art gone, Palæmon's motiveless.  
 I was a warrior thy sire's love to win ;  
 Whom now I follow in my wrong's despite,  
 As king, not friend ; my country's cause being his.  
 Else would I fain forswear the world ; seek peace  
 Beneath my father's tree, and wear out life  
 A bookish man, reading of high philosophy.

(*Enter CORYSAND from the House—carrying a water jar on her head—which she sets on the ground.*)

COR. I am not patient ; — I should bear my crosses  
 Better. 'Tis nature's flaw in me to want  
 Humility. I will but breathe the air ;  
 And then I'll back, and take my mother's chiding  
 Gently.

PAL. What have we here ? Some village lass !  
 I'll beg a cup of water from her jar ;  
 And then I'll trail me once more cityward.

COR. Would I could see old Neda ! I would ask her  
 To construe me my dream ; and give her for't,  
 That blazoned clasp she covets.  
 Three several times I dreamed the self-same dream :  
 A lion ta'en in toils, and dragged away  
 By wolves : what should that mean ? And then,  
 methought,  
 I loosed the king of beasts ; who straightway fell  
 Upon the wolves, and slew them.

(*PALEMÓN approaches unseen.*)

PAL. Young maid, prithee,  
 Vouchsafe me from your jar a cup of water ?

COR. (*Starting.*) Oh, the Gods ! What a brave gentleman !

- PAL. Sure  
I've heard that voice before! But no, 'tis fancy.  
And that lip too — I could almost believe  
It was Althæa! Conceit could scarce go further.
- COR. He speaks, but not to me.
- PAL. Fair maiden, of your courtesy, I pray you,  
Let a poor wearied soldier, from your pitcher,  
Taste of this crystal fountain. He will thank you;  
And think it sweeter for the gentle hand  
That ministers the draught.
- COR. Oh, Sir, the bounteous Gods, whose urns ex-  
haustless  
Pour out this sparkling stream, chartered all  
mortals  
Unto it's liberal use, but chiefest of all,  
The stranger. (*She fetches the jar.*)
- PAL. 'Tis herself! — the tone, the grace,  
The sweetness! What strange miracle has cast  
On this lone cottager, the charms that made  
A princess yet more royal? (*She gives him the jar.*)
- COR. This should be  
Some prince; he hath a generous courtesy  
That lesser men disdain.
- PAL. 'Tis very sweet —  
The sweetest draught, methinks, that e'er I tasted.  
I'm so renewed, I could believe it held  
Some medicinal charm.
- COR. I have heard oft,  
From withered crones, that in the ancient days,  
While yet the world was young, and freshly  
launched  
From it's Creator's hand, this fountain held  
Some magic in't; that whoso drank of it,

Straightway forgot all passages of grief  
Or adverse fortune, which had gone before ;  
And that afflicted howsoe'er he came,  
He parted hence, disburdened of all wo.

PAL. I can believe it; and e'en yet, methinks,  
It hath a virtue in't to lighten sorrow.

COR. If it were so, then we that make it our  
Familiar drink, should know none. But, alas !  
It is not thus. When olives last were green,  
The too believing Phillis died for love  
Of Lycidas; who ere their purple bloom  
Gave note of harvest, being betrayed by Lælia,  
Repentant, slew himself on Phillis' tomb.

PAL. Do village swains and maidens stake so high?  
Methought such lofty games were kept for courts,—  
To love and die,  
Play false, betray, and be betrayed in turn?

COR. Men will be false, and maidens love, alike  
In court or cottage; and perfidious ones  
Angle for plighted hearts, which being caught,  
They fling aside to perish. We're all made  
Of the same metal; and, being struck, give forth  
The self-same tune.

PAL. Believe me, I shall never  
Doubt on't henceforth.

COR. My mother, in her youth,  
Served princes, and some touch of breeding hath  
Beyond her fellows. But she will awake,  
And miss me. I have lingered here too long.

PAL. The mother's blest that owns you.

COR. She that would  
Have thought so, died, alas! ere I could know her;  
And Lucia here, that shelters me, is but  
My father's wife.

PAL. And is it there he dwells?

COR. 'Tis in his grave, Sir; or, at least, we think so.

He left us thirteen years ago, we being then  
In Argos, and has ne'er returned, nor sent us  
Tidings. But now I must away; — farewell;  
And may the Gods protect you!

PAL. Must you leave me?

Why then, farewell; 'tis may be better that  
We part; but prithee teach me first, what name  
I shall carve out upon my favourite tree;  
There where I seek the shade; or stretched at eve,  
Watch down the stars in their eternal course;  
Or gazing on the lady of the night,  
The wandering, variable moon, I question  
With her high mystery.

COR. If 'tis my name

You would, I am called Corysand.

PAL. By Jove!

A most melodious name! a charming name!  
Then Corysand, sweet Corysand, adieu!  
I would not stay you if I could; and yet  
I scarce can say farewell! If sometime chance  
Conduct me by this path—but 'tis a chance  
I shall not make, nor seek, but only hope—  
If't should be so, why, we may meet again.  
And so, once more, sweet Corysand, adieu!

COR. May the Gods guide you! Sir, farewell!

[*Exit into the house.*]

PAL. (*Looking after her*) She's gone.

'Twas time. She hath a charm that almost lured  
My silent heart to speak. Indeed, she's fair!  
If village maids were all like this, the court  
Would be forsworn, and princes leave their fellows

To mate with nature's royalties. Be not  
Incensed, my lost Althæa, nor believe me  
To thy dear memory false! 'Tis but the image  
Of thy all beauteous self, in this fair peasant  
I adore—still in my inconstancy  
Most constant.

But lo! the sun is drawing on the west,  
And o'er the hills his purple mantle flings  
Before he bids good night. My scattered com-  
rades

I must collect, and then seek home. This truce  
Has stretched all discipline, and made us rovers.

[*Exit.*]

SCENE V.—*Re-enter CORYSAND from the House.*

COR. My mother sleeps, and has not missed me yet.

(*Looks round.*)

What, gone! Methinks he might have tarried here  
One little moment—loitered but to see  
If I returned or not. Had it been I,  
I would have lingered all the day; and when  
The sun went down, have laid me at his door,  
Wearing the night out in delightful dreams  
Of his divine perfections! I'd rehearse  
Each word and look—I have them now by heart:  
As how he said, "Sweet Corysand," and then,  
"Dear Corysand"—not *dear*—he said not *dear*.  
Why should he not say *dear*? Had it been I,  
A thousand times I had said *dear*—dear what?  
Beshrew me, now, that I did not inquire  
His name, and so have none whereby to think

Of him. I cannot tune it to my lyre;  
Nor prick it on a leaf; nor make 't the burden  
Of a rhyme; nor e'en learn, by any means,  
His lineage. I shall hear of noble youths  
Being slain, and straight believe it he; and when  
They wed, I shall be sure each several one's  
Himself. Had I but heard his name, then some-  
thing

I'd had of him to keep; but now I've nothing!

(*Sees the jar.*)

Yea, I have thee, made holy by the touch  
Of his sweet lips. I would I knew the place  
They kissed — I'd drink there ever! But none else  
Shall ever press thee! Thou shalt to my chamber;  
And there we two will dwell, and make of it  
A shrine to his dear image consecrate.  
Base earth thou seem'st to all but me; — to me,  
More precious than the riches of the sea!

(*Goes towards house.*)

SCENE VI. — *She pauses as she is about to enter  
the House.*

COR. What men are these?

(*Enter LAON, MEDON, and other Spartans, with  
ARISTODEMUS prisoner, bound with thongs.*)

LA. Talk not of honour! Honour is to serve  
Our country. He who serves her best, has most.

ARIS. To serve her with dishonour is to shame her.

LA. What, if an hour before or so, a trumpet  
May have brayed out a truce, shall I let slip  
My country's direst foe, that like a dazzled

Night-bird, has run into the ambush? No!  
I want the price that's set upon your head.

COR. (*Apart*) This traitorous rogue is Spartan; and  
the other,

Some noble captive whom they lead to death.

ARIS. Done fairly, the high glory had o'ertopped it.  
But since 'tis falsely won, the infamy  
Will sink you.

COR. (*Apart*) They have fallen upon, and ta'en him  
Unawares.

MED. Howbeit, you are our captive;  
And must stay so. We catch not Kings like coney,  
To let them slip at will.

COR. (*Apart*) By mighty Jove!  
It is the King! My dream!—my dream's fulfilled!  
The lion's snared by wolves! What should come  
next?

MED. (*To LAON*) Be you advised, and say we took  
him, ere  
The truce was sounded: if we're not blamed else,  
Ne'er call me Medon.

LA. Tush, man! Being trapped,  
They'll keep him fast, and thank us.

MED. No — not thank us.  
You'll see, to save their money and their faith,  
They'll hang us; or else in the Ceadan pit  
They'll cast us — him along, for company.

COR. (*Apart*) The clang of arms, and tramp of warlike  
men,  
Have kept us weary watching thro' the night.  
He that was here, was of them. I dare swear  
They're still at hand, knew I which path to take.  
I'll trust me to the Gods who shew me this;

And leave the rest to them. Now, Mercury,  
Befriend me ! [*Exit on the side PALEMEN went.*]

LA. Well, you may not be far wrong.  
Authority doth oft-times borrow service,  
Which it would blush to pay. Seek you the camp.  
Take with you Hippias, here ; and which of these  
You will. Make good your tale ; and say, we hold  
Our captive but in durance, till we learn  
Their pleasures.

MED. I'll away at once ; meantime,  
You'll not stay here to be surprised by stragglers ?

LA. We'll follow on your track ; and plunge still deeper  
Into the wood for safety. — Fortune speed you !

MED. The grass sha'n't grow beneath our feet, I promise.  
Come with me, you, and you ; and Hippias too.  
(*Selects his men.*)

Look closely to your bird !

LA. Oh, fear not us !  
We have not limed the eagle that hath thinned  
Our flocks so long, to loose him now he'll fill  
Our purses. But away ! Each moment counts  
Against us. May the Gods be with you !

MED. And with you !  
*Omnes.* Farewell ! [*Exeunt MEDON and his men.*]

ARIS. (*Apart*) It is her curse that sits upon me !  
Had not mine arm been blighted, they had ne'er  
Prevailed against me thus. A hundred better  
Than these I've worsted, and scarce breathed the  
quicker.

I would essay to deal with them for freedom,  
But that my bated spirit lacks persuasion.  
Howbeit, I'll parley with the slaves, and try. —  
Good fellow, hear me !



LA. Is it me you call so ?

ARIS. As best amongst your fellows, I address  
My speech to you.

LA. What would you ?

ARIS. Liberty.

LA. I've oftentimes heard Messenians were but liars ;  
Howbeit, I believe you now. — What more ?

ARIS. Tyrtæus, your lame pedant, that doth fight us  
With ferula and stilus, sets a price  
Upon my head.

LA. He doth.

ARIS. How much is it ?

LA. Five hundred talents, and a good preferment.

ARIS. Give me my freedom, and I'll double it.

LA. 'Twere not too much for such a King and General.

ARIS. If not enough, I'll treble it.

LA. Such promises  
Cost nothing.

ARIS. Unless kept ; which mine shall be.

LA. Good ; very good.

ARIS. Then you accept ?

LA. Who ? I !

ARIS. 'Tis you have the command of these ?

LA. Most certain.

ARIS. Nay, listen. You shall with me to Messenia :  
I'll pay you with bright honours ; keep you near me ;  
And you shall live a prince.

LA. And die a traitor.

If you'd been bred in Lacedæmon,  
You would not be so prodigal of breath,  
Which you may ere long lack, as waste it thus  
On fruitless argument. You are my captive.  
If Sparta will reward me for you, so ;

I want the money, and have earned it fairly.  
But I'll not sell my faith, nor take your ransom,  
To live an outlaw, and to die accurst.

ARIS. You're right.— This fellow's wise, and looks beyond

The present. He will not give gold for tinsel,  
As heedless chapmen do ;  
Nor barter his free soul, and honest havings,  
For such impracticable joys, as like  
The painted fly too rudely grasped, though bright  
In the perspective, are but dross being won.  
No matter—it is better as it is.

I'll run the course that's set me. I was king  
At dawn ; by noon a slave ; and what by night ?

(*Enter CORYSAND behind.*)

LA. Now come, my friends ! The thickest of the wood  
We'll thread, and follow slowly t'wards the camp.

COR. How shall I hinder them ? For he hath yet  
His followers to seek, ere he can aid us.  
I must essay. Now, courage, Corysand !  
'Tis a king's life you play for !

#### SCENE VII.

COR. (*Advancing, and speaking aloud*) Me, alas !  
Unhappy that I am, I cannot find it !

(*She seeks on the ground.*)

I'm sure 'twas hereabouts it fell—or here—

LA. What crying woman's this ? By Jove ! she's hand-  
some.

Maiden, what seek you with such clamorous grief ?

COR. Sir, 'tis a ring. You have not chanced to see it ?

LA. Not I, fair maid.— Why, this is sure the flower  
Of all Messenian beauty! — Is't a ring?  
You should not want for rings. What, was it precious?

COR. To us. It was a token that my father  
Did to my mother give; which she so cherished,  
I'd rather lose my hand, than lose the trinket.

LA. (*Aside*) How would it crown my enterprise to crop  
This rose, and bear't along with me to Sparta!  
Five hundred talents, and this maid to wife,  
Were pretty garnish for a soldier's life.

(*While LAON speaks to his men, CORYSAND  
approaches ARISTODEMUS.*)

COR. Would I could find it! (*To ARIS.*) I beseech you,  
move!

(*She cuts the thongs whilst seeming to search,  
and whispers to him*)—

Keep a firm heart, there's help at hand. (*Aloud*)  
I swear

I see it now. (*Whispers*) Stir not until I bid you,  
For your life! (*Aloud*) Sure I am 'twas here it fell.

LA. (*Advancing*) The jewel must be rich were worth  
this hand.

COR. Like most things else we love, it's worth was bor-  
rowed

From our opinion. E'en the memories  
We link with parting gifts, are still but sorrows,  
Which we have looked on, till we've learned to  
love them.

LA. Thus may the beauty that we most admire,  
Dwell only in th' admirer's eyes?

COR. E'en so;  
Or all would like the same.

LA. I' faith, sweet girl,  
I cannot tell if you are fair, or if  
Mine eyes do paint you so; but this I swear,  
That either mine or yours do strangely stir  
My heart to love you, and my tongue to speak.  
Will't be a soldier's mate, and come along  
To Sparta?

COR. What welcome shall I find there  
From your wife?

LA. Wife! I never had a wife.

COR. You do but jest. (*Aside, after looking round*) I  
must amuse him still.—

Are you from Sparta? So was my poor father.  
A mariner he was, that lived upon  
The seas; oft venturing to distant climes;  
Trading for rare commodities, rich stuffs,  
And odorous spices from the East; and jewels  
From southern shores, where e'en the sands are  
gold;  
But chiefly wines — wines of the rarest flavour.  
He left us store of such, when last he parted,  
Never, alas! to see us more.

LA. How so?

COR. Wrecked, Sir, as we believe. The wine we held  
As sacred, whilst we hoped to see him back.  
But now, that hope being dead, and our shrunk  
fortunes

Urge us, my mother seeks a market for't  
Amongst the princely revellers in the city.

LA. How if I purchase it myself? What say you?  
I'd do it for your sake. If you'll with me,  
You shall not need to stretch your scanty fortunes,

By sorry shifts. I shall be rich, anon ;

I've won a prize. How say you? Will you come?

COR. (*Aside*) Would they were here! — I fear you're  
over hasty.

You may repent. Come, you shall taste the wine.

A cup will help you on your way; meantime,

I'll weigh your words.

LA. I'll not repent; but take

Both it and you, upon your beauty's warrant.

COR. Be not too confident. The old saw says,  
There's truth in wine; but women are deceivers.

LA. Well, well; be speedy. I'm not wise to linger.

COR. I will be back, ere you can think me there.

[*Exit to house.*]

LA. There's an enchantment in those eyes of her's,  
That plants me to the soil. We will but wet  
Our lips; then thread the wood before the night  
Sets in.

ARIS. (*Aside*) She spoke of help. Whence should help  
come?

Or how advised is she of its approach?

Howbeit, the fable of the Phrygian slave

Persuades me to obey her.

The honest mouse, forsooth, set free the lion;

Why not a village lass a King?

(*Re-enter CORYSAND, and Slave with wine.*)

COR. I've even lost my breath with speed to serve you.

Taste this; it is of Crete. How like you it?

LA. 'Tis good; but what would not a Hebe relish?

COR. Your followers must taste.

LA. (*To his men*) Drink, and be speedy.

(*The Slave serves the Spartans — CORYSAND  
serves ARISTODEMUS.*)

COR. (*Whispers him*) All's safe. Be wary. (*To LAON*)

For this other jar,

I think 'tis from Sicania: will you try it?

LA. No more. We've drank enough. Well, what  
d' you say?

COR. How if I take you at your word? You soldiers  
Are, most times, rovers. Rich enough in vows;  
But for your heart, I swear it has been pawned  
At every town in Argia.

LA. 'Tis not so.

I never was a courtier. Rough I am,  
But honest. Trust me, and you'll find me so.  
I dare not longer tarry. Come; our way  
Is by the wood; and when these tender limbs  
Of your's are weary, we'll construct a litter  
Of branches, and we'll bear you on our shoulders.

COR. May be I will. Give me a cup of wine,  
'T inspire me with more courage. You shall pledge  
me.

(*To Slave*) Supply us from the other jar.

LA. Why so?

COR. 'Tis a rare wine, and no man knows its vintage.  
My father being wrecked on a strange shore,  
Found there a race of men—if men they were,  
For they were black, with shining skins, and such  
Divine proportions, that like sable statues  
Of Hell's dark King, they more seemed marble  
Gods.

Their lustrous forms they robed in golden nets;  
And round their arms and necks hung gorgeous  
jewels;

Which twinkled on their jetty skin like stars  
Upon the deepest purple of the sky.

ARIS. She's playing the fellow to her proper measure.

(PALÆMON and his men are seen amongst the trees.)

LA. What, is this wine of their's?

COR. But try it's flavour!  
In that voluptuous clime, grapes grew on trees  
That sheltered men; whilst clustering berries,  
weighed  
By their rich juices, kissed the generous soil!

ARIS. Excellent girl!

LA. 'I faith! the wine is choice.

But come, we must away; fall in, my men!

COR. (*Aside*) You've staid my time. (*To ARIS.*) —

Be bold! — Had I a sword  
To furnish him, 'twere perfect!

LA. Now, sweet girl,  
You'll be my comrade. — But one kiss, to pledge  
Our faith before we start. — Keep close, my fellows!  
Look to your prisoner! — March,  
*Whilst LAON is kissing her, she obtains his sword,  
which she gives to ARISTODEMUS. On the word  
'March,' PALÆMON and his men advance.)*

PAL. A rescue! a rescue! Strike for the King!

COR. Now, mighty Mars! assist them!

(*LAON missing his sword, snatches one from a soldier, and rushes on CORYSAND.*)

LA. Designing devil! now I see your fraud.

Die, for your perfidy!

ARIS. Nay, kill me first!

'Twill more advantage to your fame, than taking  
A woman's life for loyalty!

(*ARISTODEMUS attacks LAON — CORYSAND obtains  
a sword from one of the fallen, and defends her-  
self, when a Spartan attacks her.*)

COR. Methinks, some warrior's soul late free'd, has passed  
Into my breast ! Come on ! I fear nor death,  
Nor thee !

*Spartan.* Your arm is fainter than your heart.

PAL. (*Advances to her rescue*)—

Hold off, thou slave ! Thy life shall pay the hope  
To harm her ! Dastard, die !

ARIS. (*Who has slain LAON*)— Are any more ?

COR. He's free ! He's free ! (*The Spartans are beat off.*)

ARIS. My noble girl, I thank thee !

(*Messenians cheer.*)— Aristodemus live ! Long live  
the King !

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## ACT IV.

SCENE I. — *An Apartment in the Palace — Enter  
ARISTODEMUS and MARDONIUS.*

ARIS. An envoy sent from Sparta ?

MAR. Aye, my Lord.

Adrastus is his name ; I know the man.  
He says, ambassadors are on the road,  
To offer terms of peace.

ARIS. 'Tis best for all.

Give me a seat, Mardonius ; — here ; another  
For yourself. So, let's sit, and talk at ease.  
I am not very well ; draw nearer, friend.  
Well, have you seen this Spartan ?

MAR. Aye, my Lord ;  
And e'en broke ground a little on their mission.



ARIS. How? Saw you their instructions?

MAR. Not exactly.

But their intent I've gathered; for their chief,  
Alcander, and myself, being linked by ties  
Of intermarriage, he, desiring peace  
No less than we, has bade me smooth the way;  
And to that end, has sent me the conditions.

ARIS. And they are? —

MAR. First, that we restore Taygetus;  
And next, that we abstain from sacrificing  
At the Limnæan shrine.

ARIS. And what said you?

MAR. For giving back the lands, I knew your Highness  
Would not hear on't. The rest, I thought, might  
pass.

ARIS. Never, Mardonius, never! They shall rather  
Possess the lands, than banish us from Limnæ!

MAR. (*With astonishment*) My Lord!

ARIS. What? Shall we sell the service of our Gods?  
'Twere an ill peace were bought at such a cost!

MAR. Had I but guessed at this, I'd been more cautious.  
He has dispatched one secretly to gather  
Further instructions in this nice conjuncture.

ARIS. No matter; they shall learn my mind to-morrow.—  
There was a thing, besides, I had to say,  
But that I scarce can shape it into words.

I would not you should think me mad, Mardonius.

MAR. I think so, my dear Lord! The heavens forefend!

ARIS. Indeed, I do not think I am; for being so,  
I should not reason on mine own conceit,  
Which then would seem substantial.— Touch my  
hand.

How does it feel?

MAR. 'Tis hotter than it's wont ;  
And not so firm as when it hurled a quoit  
At Elis.

ARIS. It will never be again,  
Mardonius ! I am sapless now, and withering ;  
The healthy juices of my frame parched up ;  
My body wasted with my mind's disease. —  
Dost not remember Laodamia's curse ?

MAR. Think not of it, my dear Lord ; words — wild  
words ;  
Outpourings of an o'ercharged heart ; mere breath,  
Incapable of harm.

ARIS. What else is on me ?  
Mine eyes are faithful to their common office —  
Mine ears as true to their's ; — I am not mad —  
And yet e'en now — Away ! Away ! Wherefore  
Pursue me thus ? Indeed, I am not mad.

MAR. Assuredly. What is't ?

ARIS. Look there ! Look there !  
Dost see ? — Why, flesh and blood of man *must*  
shrink !  
Nay, kneel not now ! Too late, too late for mercy !  
You should have knelt before — have clasped my  
knees,  
And called me “ Father ! ”

MAR. This is but delusion ;  
Some strange distemper of the nerves, those springs  
Of curious workmanship, that link the soul  
With our material part ; the swift ambassadors  
’Twixt mind and matter, which, corrupt themselves,  
Perplex by false instructions both adherents.

ARIS. I tell you, friend, she's ever at my side ;  
Stands in the door-way, and obstructs my path, —

Fills up the vacant chair ;—and then her voice !  
That piteous lamentable cry ! Sometimes  
I hear it from afar, borne on the wind —  
And then, again, she whispers me — that's worse.

MAR. Oh, my dear Lord, these are mere vapors — vapors  
Begot of melancholy thoughts — no more.

ARIS. Why then, I'm mad ! mad in the worst degree !  
For wer't not better to be wholly lost,  
Than keep of sense enough to mourn what's gone ?  
But that I know you love me, I had not,  
Mardonius, thus laid bare my bruised heart.  
But the tired spirit, that before the world  
The likeness of a King puts on, and pranks  
'Fore envious eyes the graces and the pomps  
Of Majesty — itself at odds, the while,  
With eating anguish, terrible despair ;  
Torn with contention, metttled by reproof ;  
Perplexed, amazed, unable to discern  
What is from what is not — flies, like a bird  
Escaped from wanton boys, to seek repose  
And shelter in some friendly breast. For, oh !  
Mardonius, I have fatally miscounted ;  
And, like an eager gamester playing false  
To win, I've thereby lost myself.

MAR. My Lord,  
You weigh yourself too curiously in this.  
The pressing peril — the excited multitude —  
No time for pause —

ARIS. Mardonius, hush ! Lose not  
The honesty I love, t'excuse the crime  
I hate. Yet, of Hell's temptings 'tis the subtlest,  
To shew the thing we covet, in the limit  
Of other's reach. One devil we may vanquish ;

But afore two we fall !  
The wages of Ambition, lofty fiend,  
He doth himself instruct us to contemn ;  
Shewing it more glorious to disdain his gifts,  
Than wear his badge of service. But then comes  
The devil Envy ; pricking us with sneers,  
Urging with flattery, and vexed comparisons,  
That sting our fond conceit of self-devotion ;  
Till, fretted to the quick, we toss the rein  
To passion ; which o'er-riding judgment, sense,  
Perception, bursts all bonds of duty — ties  
Of household love ; till flung at last, we're left  
To perish on the world's highway, or starve  
On the scant alms of common sympathy.  
In semblance Gods, but bearing in our hearts  
Hell's pains ! Stern rulers, that can't quell the strife  
Within ! Warriors at issue with a shade !  
Fathers without children, husbands without  
Wives — still alone 'midst congregated thousands ;  
The merest outcasts of the earth we fall,  
Dying unpitied, as we've lived unloved !  
But so : 'tis time to think o' these ambassadors,  
And how to answer them.  
Come, friend. We two began the world together ;  
But we have walked in't most unlike. You've kept  
The shade, plucking discreetly as you passed  
The modest benefits of nature. I,  
Amid the splendour of the noontide sun,  
Have snatched, perchance, some ostentatious joys,  
Brighter than your's ; but mine have, fading, turned  
To poisons, blistering the hand that held them.  
Your's will bloom ever, wholesome to the last ;

And e'en yourself surviving, shall embalm  
Your memory with the savour of their sweetness.  
[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II. — *Lucia's Cottage and Fountain, as in Act 3d.* — Enter LUCIA and CREONTES from the Cottage.

- CRE. How! Corysanda at the court, say you?  
Adopted by the King? This is most strange!
- LUC. The King has done no more than she deserved.  
He had not kinged it now, but for her aid.  
What less return had mated such a service?
- CRE. How seeming purposeless, yet how direct  
Thy course, oh Destiny! But wherefore, Lucia,  
Took he not you?
- LUC. I would not go, Creontes.  
I am too old to learn new manners now;  
Or put away my ease for state.
- CRE. Methinks,  
Your ease had been the greater.
- LUC. I've enough.  
He sends me gold; and that ensures the rest.  
Since you forsook us, we have lived but ill.  
You needed not, being prosperous yourself,  
Have left us in such straits.
- CRE. I parted from you,  
Intending to return, as I have said.  
'Twas chance conducted me again to Sparta;  
And interests reawakened, kept me there.
- LUC. And you forgot your wife and child?
- CRE. Not so.

I sought you both, as you will well believe,  
When you have learnt my reasons; but being  
gone,

No man could tell me where, I lost all trace.

LUC. We thought you dead; and thereon quitted Argos;  
And here, where I was bred, I came to lay  
My bones.

CRE. The chance that has rejoined us now,  
Will make the happiness of more than you  
Yet dream of. We must to Messenia straight;  
The treaty waits for me. And as we go,  
I will instruct you what strong reasons moved me  
In all that's past, and how to act the present.  
Thus much, meantime, I'll breathe, to raise your  
wonder:

Corysand is no child of mind—no kin.  
You look amazed; but I have that to tell  
Will startle you still more. No questions now:  
Time urges us away. Hie in with speed,  
And make you ready; for we are the heralds  
Of such glad news, that, lifted from the earth,  
The wings of angels should be lent, to waft us  
Upon our mission! [Exeunt.

SCENE III.—*Apartment in the Palace of Aristodemus.*—Enter CORYSAND and PALÆMON.

PAL. Thus have I shewn you, my sweet Corysand,  
And faithfully, as to th' all-seeing Gods,  
The simple story of my past affections—  
How dear I loved Althæa, and how strangely  
I was bereft of her; and how, thus widowed,

All thoughts of mating me I had forsworn;  
 Vowing to dedicate my blighted youth  
 To her sole memory;—how, you beholding,  
 The heart believed itself inurned with her's,  
 Cold as her ashes, and incapable  
 Of love, at once was quickened; how, at first,  
 I chid it, flying the solicitations  
 Of my delighted sense; till they, who better  
 Than ourselves shape out our courses for us,  
 Bore me again to your divinest presence,  
 And shewed me how my dark and stubborn will  
 Was shoaling me, thro' turbid waters, on  
 A hapless strand, the blesséd shore shot by,  
 That would have harboured me.

COR. Oh, ye sweet Gods! 'T have dwelt 'mongst peasant swains,

Unmannered rustics, and uncourteous tillers  
 Of the fields; listening to their rugged accents,  
 And the harsh discords of their untuned voices;  
 And then, my unaccustomed ears to feast  
 On this melodious carol—this rich jet,  
 Poured from a noble source—this silvery flood  
 Of soft persuasion, whose perfume and music,  
 Enthralling the rapt sense, scarce leaves enough  
 To answer! What shall Corysanda say?  
 I ne'er loved aught but you: but that's no boast—  
 I ne'er saw aught to love. Soon as I saw,  
 I loved: but that's no shame—how could my  
 heart

Resist? You smile, and, may be, think me light  
 O' love—you shall not find it so.

The spring that bursts forth joyous from its fountain,

If not unkindly checked, flows on for ever,  
Nor seeks its source again, nor yet to turn;  
But sparkling, bright and beauteous, and augmented

By a thousand tiny streamlets falling in,  
It keeps its pleasant course. Believe, the wings  
On which my heart flew forth to meet your own,  
Were melted in the sunshine of that joy,  
To leave it the glad inmate of your breast  
For ever.

PAL. I believe 't, sweet Corysand!  
And in that faith confirmed, intend this day  
To ask the King your hand.

COR. Will he consent? Alas! almost his son!  
A Prince that should be wedded with a Princess!

(ARISTODEMUS *enters behind, and stops to listen.*)

PAL. And were the Prince a King, 'twould too much  
grace him!

The Gods, that all things fashion to their uses,  
Will have you royal. Could they have designed  
These dainty limbs for toil? — this curious chiselling,

This soft integument of blended rose  
And lily — this most faultless finishing —  
This lofty brow, and lips of sweet command,  
But for a shepherd's adoration?

ARIS. (*Apart*) Good!  
'Tis as I wished — they love. Gods! make them  
blest in't!

COR. The canvas  
You sketch on, is your own imagining;  
The painter Love — the inference fantastic.



What argument is this to win the King?

ARIS. (*Advancing*) The King shall need no better; he  
is won

Already; for his heart was o' your side  
From the beginning.

Take her! Tho' she received not life from me,  
Her hold should be as strong; since I to her  
Owe mine. He will be faithful, girl, and fond.  
Kind and true-hearted I have ever found him;  
Gentle withal, and patient; rather pitying  
Than revenging; aware, beyond his years,  
How much we're mortal—how below the Gods!  
Our reason how infirm—how predominate  
Our passions! You shall wed without delay.  
To-morrow? Aye; what think you of to-mor-  
row?

Nay, be not nice: pluck roses while they bloom—  
The first Levanter nips them.

I am for present joys. Who's lived the past,  
Forereads the curtained future; which, unveiled,  
Would oft-times scare us. It shall be to-morrow.  
The moon's full age, besides, is fortunate.  
There is a mission on the way from Sparta;  
They offer peace, which we shall pleased accept.  
'Tis of her winning; she is now our warrior—  
The vanquisher of Sparta; and we'll crown  
Her snowy brows with laurel leaves, entwined  
With orange. Trust me, my fair Corysand,  
We'll have a royal pageant. For your dower,  
It shall be such as might become the offspring  
Of my bed, since heir of my love you are.

(*She takes his hand.*)

I am not happy, but I'd have you so;

And hope to shape it well. — Good girl! good girl!

(*He kisses her brow.*)

'Tis, may be, some infection of the air,

More sultry than it's wont: but I have dreams —

Uneasy dreams — I would believe them dreams —

(*Abstractedly*) But how? To dream awake? —

That would be madness.

There is a state 'twixt slumbering wakefulness

And dreamy sleep — a fanning of Sleep's wings,

Before she drops them in profound repose —

You have seen nothing on't? (*To PALEMEN.*)

PAL.

Of what, my Lord?

ARIS. Of her — of her. She hath not crossed your path

By day, nor drawn your curtain i' the dead

Of night?

PAL.

Is't my Lady the Queen?

ARIS.

Aye, she;

'Twas of the Queen I spake. Be not, young man,  
Imperative to learn that which imports

You not. It is th' accustomed vice of youth.

We that are old know much. 'Twas of the Queen

I spake. Where is she? We must seek her now,

And tell her of these things. Look, you bespeak

Her fair; for she hath had her crosses. — Come,

My children, we will to her straight. To-morrow

It shall be. I am therein constant. Lo, there!

Is't not the Queen? 'Tis she — 'tis Laodamia

Comes this way. Now, we'll open on this theme?

But very warily, — mark, warily.

(*Enter LAODAMIA.*)

## SCENE IV.

ARIS. Come hither, wife! I have a secret for you.  
Guess now, what 'tis!

LAO. I've not that illness in me to expound  
Your thoughts. The creatures likest to ourselves  
We may interpret; but I have no index  
Within my heart to shew me your's.

ARIS. A truce,  
Sweet wife! Those are ill wounds which never  
heal.

Come on! We have a match to-fore.

LAO. What match?

ARIS. 'Twixt this and this.

LAO. Indeed!

ARIS. How like you it?

LAO. So well,

I gar you bid me not to the betrothal!

ARIS. Aye, but we will, and you shall come, Damia.  
Were we not young ourselves? These lustrous  
tresses

Excel not those that decked thy graceful head,  
When from my brow I raised the Nimæan wreath  
I'd won, and placed it sportively on thine.  
Hast thou forgot, how curiously I twined  
The golden threads amongst the shining leaves  
Of that green diadem?

LAO. The memories of our lost delights  
Are furrows to the soul; whose deep indentures  
But chronicle th' amount of present wo.

ARIS. Nay,  
I will not be put off. I know, good wife,

You can't forget — nor perhaps can I; — it may  
be,

You have some cause. — Alas! how one brief mo-  
ment

In a man's life may comprehend the volume  
Of his whole destiny! — But good, now, wife!  
Cast back for twenty years, and then count up  
What sum of love hath been betwixt us two.  
'Tis a record will stand, spite of offence.  
The past enjoyed is ours; and to each other  
It was we owed it. Twenty years is much  
Of a man's life; and who can call them prosperous,  
Hath a rich memory to draw upon.  
Few are the barks that steer on to the last  
Without a rub; yet that which walked the seas  
For twenty years unscathed, should not chide  
fortune

For one misventure.

LAO. Yet, the bought pilot might she justly chide  
That ran her on the rocks at last, to gorge  
His own damned avarice!  
For all the ills the Gods inflict, they furnish  
Patience, and shew us 'tis a destiny  
We cannot 'scape; but for the wrongs we hurl  
'Gainst one another, they have left us naked.  
The first, like sailors foundering at sea,  
We meet. No ship in hail, nor hope, nor means  
Of safety; who, straightway, betaking them  
To prayer, sink down, like men foredoomed to  
die so —

Amazed, but overawed — not knowing whence  
Nor whither tends the dealing of the Gods.  
But luckless mariners, that wreck in sight

Of shore, of wife, of children, home, and all  
 That makes life dear, die fighting with their fate ;  
 Clutching at ropes, at planks, and jagged rocks ;  
 Scaring the night with wailing cries for aid ;  
 Till, hoarse and mangled, they go down at last,  
 To be heaved up again, and cast astrand,  
 With fierce rebellion on their bloody brows,  
 To fright the livers ! This is the hard anguish —  
 And this is mine.

ARIS. But what the Gods permit,  
 They will.

LAO. Not so. They've given us choice, desires,  
 Affections, passions, to all holy uses  
 Adapt and dedicate ; which we, misusing,  
 Converting them to whips to scourge ourselves,  
 Carve our own fortunes. We revile the Gods  
 To cast our ills on them, who've shewn us means  
 To check them.

ARIS. Howbeit, wife,  
 The past and the foredoomed are equal ; seeing  
 We can as much revoke the one, as 'scape  
 The other. What avails it then to strive ?

LAO. Nothing — I know it ; but my blood is fire —  
 My heart a cauldron, which doth ever send  
 Dark fumes up to my brain, which must find vent  
 In scalding words, or acts would still more shake  
 you.

(To PALÆMON) For you, Sir—you, that would be  
 wed, and can

So soon forget — I had esteemed you better  
 Than to believe, that like a summer fly  
 You'd sip at all you meet. What's she that stands  
 By you ? A sparrow in the eagle's nest —

A wench to lie in a Princess's sheets !  
If e'er she stretch herself in her's that was—  
And would be now, but for the foul'st of practice—

ARIS. Oh woman, peace !

LAO. There is no peace ! Where's mine you have destroyed ?

Oh ye high Gods ! how like a cunning murderer  
He cries on Peace, that hath himself foredone her !

ARIS. How blessed are the dead, for they have quiet !  
The dead which wake not, but sleep on the heavy,  
Heavy sleep—dreamless sleep ! For better 'twere  
To burst the balls with watching, than to drop  
The weary lid, which, like a painted curtain,  
Serves but to shew us images of horror !

(Enter MARDONIUS.)

MAR. Th' ambassadors from Sparta are arrived,  
And wait your Highness' pleasure.

ARIS. (*Rousing himself*) True, Mardonius ;  
We had forgotten. True ; prepare the hall  
Of audience ; we'll receive them royally.  
How many be there ?

MAR. Two already come,  
Eumæus and Alcander. One more follows,  
With last instructions, whom they call Creontes.

ARIS. (*To LAOD.*) Madam, we beg your leave ; we've  
business with

Our servant here, and we would fain be private.  
You've ta'en us at advantage ; we've been patient—  
Too patient—and have heard that we should not.  
Look not to carry 't thus at all times.  
Know us for what we are—your King and husband.  
For this young man and maid, they shall be wed.

An you will lend your countenance, 'twere well ;  
'Twould better grace your Queenship than the suit  
You wear. If not, they shall be wed;— we've  
said it.

You've stept beyond your leave ; which privilege  
We counsel you put off at earliest leisure.  
So now, farewell ! I pray, let these go with you.

Lao. Oh, Sir, I thank you for the pains that culls  
My company —

ARIS. No more, I must beseech !  
Our ear is all for Sparta. We are absolute.  
Madam, good-night. Mardonius, you may hope  
To see a bridal in the morn. Look here ;  
Are they not well matched ?

(ARISTODEMUS and MARDONIUS *speak apart*  
*with CORYSAND and PALEMON.*)

Lao. This is exceeding pleasant ! As I live,  
I think he hopes to mouth me from my vengeance ;  
Tame me with words, as nurses frighten babes.  
I shall not speak out my despair, but let it  
Choke me. Oh, good ! Why then, since breath  
offends him,  
We'll give him deeds ; which if he like them not,  
The fault be his, that damming up the stream  
Of my revenge, has made it burst it's confines !

[*Exit.*]

ARIS. Follow, my children, and fear not.

[*Exeunt CORYSAND and PALEMON.*]

Come, friend,  
To counsel ; we must prank it to the last,  
And finish royally !

[*Exeunt ARISTODEMUS and MARDONIUS.*]

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## ACT V.

SCENE I. — *An Apartment in the Palace — CORYSAND reclining on a Couch or Arm-chair — Women attending her.*

COR. Give me some water

To cool my fevered lips! — Oh time! Oh days!  
Oh hours! So seeming fair, and yet so false! —  
Smiling like wingéd cherubs as ye pass,  
Whilst hiding 'neath your plumes, such monstrous  
births

Of horror — how, oh how, have ye beguiled me!

PHO. Madam, the Queen's at hand.

COR.

Will she come here?

(*Enter LAODAMIA.*)

LAO. (*Apart*) Now that 'tis done, I could almost relent,  
But that I will not. Let me think upon  
Thy wrongs, my lost Althæa, to confirm  
My failing heart! Thy blood, yet unatoned,  
Cries out upon me for revenge; whilst he,  
The savage slayer of us both, still triumphs —  
Bars my complaints — insults my woes — and dares  
me

To worst extremity! — How is it with you?

COR. Sick, madam; — very sick.

LAO.

So, so; you'll soon

Be better.

COR. They that are above, know that!

LAO. You will not, I bethink me, wed to-day?

COR. To-day! nor ever — as we both know well.

LAO. Tush! tush! you are afraid.



- COR. Madam, I have  
An awe upon me, but not fear. I never  
Feared aught but to do ill, and I have done  
The least I could.
- LAO. Such are the happiest—  
Most fit to live or die.
- COR. I am prepared  
For either destiny.
- LAO. This girl hath something  
Of my own temper; that which was—not is;  
Now I am nought but what my wrongs have made  
me.
- COR. I'll not deny that I would gladly live.  
I've not outworn the taste of life; and hoped,  
Henceforth, to find it sweeter: but whate'er  
I'm not to hold, I can let go with patience.
- LAO. 'Tis well; for what the Gods will have, they will,  
And to reclaim against their law were bootless.
- COR. Madam, I heard your Highness say but late,  
That 'gainst the arrows that the Gods fling at us,  
They have themselves equipped us;—but 'gainst  
those  
We hurl at one another, they have left us  
Naked. What shoots from Heaven, or what from  
earth,  
We know not always; but sometimes may guess.  
But wanting the foreknowledge to prevent  
Or one or t' other, we must yield to both;  
And silence is best wisdom, where reproach  
Were vain. I have not much breath left; and that  
I have, would temperately use; yet dying,  
I would your Grace should learn, that had I lived,  
I'd not been so beneath my promised fortune,

That I should pay the forfeit of my hope  
With all my rest of years. 'Tis true, indeed,  
I know not what it is to be a Princess;  
Nor how, in my estate, nobility  
Might test; but this I surely know — that being  
But lowly born, I bear the sharpest pangs,  
And yet command my breath to measured words,  
That fain would issue in discordant cries;  
And having wrongs which try the soul more deeply,  
Than worst corporeal pain, I yet forbear  
To utter weak complainings; and abstain  
From curses that would wither; or invoking  
Vengeance, which yet might wait upon my words.  
To the high mercy of the Gods, alike,  
I do commend my friends and enemies;  
And to their care commit myself with reverence.  
To that young Prince that should this day have  
wed me,  
By whom I know myself as much beloved,  
As he by me — I presently intend,  
If I have breath enough, to bid farewell,  
But no word more; for I would not put that  
Upon his patience, that might o'erlay it;  
But rather leave his spirit free to spring  
Again, when I am sometime gone, to bear him  
A fresh hope. I can die in silence, when  
To speak had been revenge; and with me carry  
Unto the dead that secret, which being left  
Amongst the living would have bred but mischiefs,  
Worse than a poor girl's ending. Madam, farewell!  
I've yet a parting left, for one I love;  
And would be private.  
The dead are greater than the living are,  
That dare not front them; and the dying, whose first

Preferment 'tis, may take precedence next.  
Attend her Highness hence. Raise me this pillow;  
And introduce the Prince.

LAO.

I fain would speak—

But she has stopt my breath. I am o'ermastered,  
And the high soul she bears has quelled the hatred  
That was in me, and turned disdain to awe! —  
Young maid, since dying you have shewn me what  
You are, you shall not part in the belief  
That what I dare to act, I fear to own.  
As public as your death shall be its cause.  
Nor would I have you think yourself so much  
The subject of my malice, as the means  
Of my revenge; which boiling up, ran o'er,  
And you being near, have perished in the flood.  
If 'twere sufficient to redeem the past,  
To wish the present other than it is,  
We both might live; but seeing to recant  
Were vain, we both must die. You do but go  
Before—and that not much. The spark that fed  
My life was passion; which being now extinct,  
I've scarce so much validity remains,  
As serves to bear me hence. You've fallen 'mongst  
The ruins of a noble house, and 'midst  
Their records shall your own be registered.  
We will not say *farewell* — for that would mock  
Ourselves, who know that all that's left to us  
Is ill; but we'll touch hands, and part in silence.

COR. Madam, here's mine; and Heaven pardon all!

[Exit LAODAMIA.]

Phocia, some water! I grow fainter—fainter—  
And life ebbs fast. Now comes the worst—his  
grief!

(Enter PALEMEN, who shrinks back dismayed.)

## SCENE II.

- COR. Come nearer, my Palæmon ! Nearer yet !  
My voice grows weak ; and my dim eyes scarce  
trace  
Those well known features. I am dying, love !  
For I've no time to soften such a word ;  
Aye, surely dying — there's nor help, nor remedy.
- PAL. Dying ! My wife ! my love ! what is't you mean ?  
Dying of what ? Nay, 'tis impossible !  
So young ! so fair ! so redolent of life !  
I'll not believe it ! Rouse up thy good spirits,  
And let me fetch thee aid ; — all will be well ! —  
Why, 'tis inviting Death, to meet him thus !
- COR. Hope not, Palæmon, and forbear to trouble  
My calmed spirit with useless aspirations.  
I am death stricken ; and the cruel poison —
- PAL. Poison ! Oh pitiful Gods ! Say not poison !  
Poison from whom ? How ? — when ? But where-  
fore ask ?  
I see it all.
- COR. I did not mean to tell you ;  
But she that did it doth avow the act.
- PAL. Oh ! name her not ! Fell woman ! name her not !  
And this is then my bridal ! — this the day  
That was to bless me ! Curses on thy house,  
Thou bloody King, that breeds but death and ruin !
- COR. No curses, sweet ! Leave them to Heaven ! Be we  
Above all fortune. Loving and beloved  
I die : t' have lived, were scarce more blest. As-  
sist me

To lift my head;—I'd look upon thee once.  
Poor, poor Palæmon! You will think upon me?

PAL. Think on thee!

COR. Aye; but let the memory be  
How blest you made me. Think not how we  
parted,  
But how we met. Not other's wrongs recall,  
But your own tenderness and my true love.  
Entwine my image in your mind with flowers,  
Not deadly weeds. Forgive and pity all.  
Keep undefiled the temple of your thoughts,  
That there thy Corysant may dwell enshrined  
In holiness. Yet would I have thee happy;  
Not to forget—but free to love again.

PAL. Never! Oh never! I'll but breathe so long  
As you shall need my breath to comfort you;  
Then spend the rest in such a rending sigh,  
My heart shall split, and send me after thee!

COR. Not yet, Palæmon! Time will do much. Live,  
Live, my beloved! my spirit shall be near thee.—  
Oh these sharp pangs! They say death's hand is  
cold;

But me it burns and sears like molten lead.  
Poor fool! poor fool! See now what 'tis to soar!  
The bird that flew too high scorched by the sun.—  
Farewell! farewell! Commend me to the King!

PAL. Sweet wife, farewell! Oh! wretched, wretched  
fate!

COR. Some light there, ho! — Who drags me by the  
hair?

And lifts my skull? And now they writhe my  
limbs!

Help there! Ah! thankye! thankye! — that gives ease.

Plunge me down deep in the cool wave! So, so;  
Oh! cruel, cruel — 'tis a bath of fire!

PAL. Oh Corysand! sweet Corysand!

COR. (*Starting from the couch —*)

Who calls on Corysand? Nay, I've not tarried.  
But you chide so always. — Ah! a prisoner!  
Hush! hush! Be wary! See, I've cut the thongs;  
Anon you shall be free. — More wine! more wine!  
Ha! ha! Why, fellow, I can fight!

PAL. Alas! Alas!

COR. Yes, Sir, 'tis Corysand I'm called; farewell!

I must away before my mother wakes.

Faith! 'tis a pretty gentleman! — What, gone!

He might have staid a little.

PAL. Prithee, love,

Lie down; and let me hold thee in mine arms.

COR. Away! away!

PAL. What, to thine own Palæmon?

COR. Ah! have I found you? Come, we must be speedy,

Lest they be gone. It is the King, indeed.

Shine forth, sweet moon!

The night is murky, and the dank air chills me.

Come on — come on — and wrap me round and  
round —

For now I freeze, and turn to very stone. —

Hush! hush! Tread lightly that she hear us not,

For her revenge is deadly! Come on! Softly!

This way 'tis — softly — softly — softly — softly. —

(CORYSAND *sinks to the ground and dies* — PALÆMON  
*throws himself beside her.*)

SCENE III.—*The Hall of the Throne.—Courtiers ranged around.—Enter ARISTODEMUS hastily — followed by MARDONIUS.*

ARIS. Not well enough to wed to-day! Who says so?  
Is it herself?

MAR. It was the Lady Corysanda's self,  
My Lord, that sent as much to Prince Palæmon.

ARIS. And why not send to me?—Not wed to day,  
And I not told on't! Where is young Palæmon?  
Summon him here!

MAR. I saw him pass but now,  
Much troubled, and in haste, towards the Queen's  
Apartments.

ARIS. When he comes, I'll question him.—  
Too ill to wed to day! Why, yesternorn  
She was not ill—nor yesternight—I'm sure on't.  
So sudden ill!—What women are about her?

MAR. Mostly the Queen's. Her Grace's favourite slave,  
Phocia, hath chief direction.

ARIS. Phocia, her Grace's favourite slave! Her minion!  
Those devils are exceeding apt to mischief,  
Whose very lives being propertied to us,  
Hold no investment in the general stock.  
Call the physician here, and say I'd speak  
With him myself.—Well yesternight—to-day  
Too ill to wed! I'll visit her at once,  
And be resolved.

SCENE IV.—*Enter Ambassadors.*

MAR. *Some other time, my Lord.*  
 'Tis the ambassadors to wait upon  
 Your Grace. This is Alcander, whom I named;  
 And this Eumæus.

ARIS. *(Absently)* Gentlemen, pray sit.  
 I take this visit kind.— So ill! So sudden!  
 And I not told— I will examine it.

MAR. *(To Ambassadors)* His Highness is perplexed  
 with many cares;  
 Matters of high concernment to the state.  
*(To ARIS.)* My Lord! my Lord! recall yourself!  
 Look round—  
 'Tis the ambassadors from Sparta.

ARIS. *Ha!*  
 Most true! I was involved in strange conjectures.  
 Gentlemen, you are welcome to Messenia!  
*(To Attendants)* Fall back!— *(Ascends the throne)*— My Lord Alcander, as I think,  
 We've seen you here before, and, by your side,  
 A gentle lady you called wife— the cousin  
 To good Mardonius here, our trusty friend.  
 How fares she?

ALC. Well, my Lord;  
 And will be better for your Highness asking.

ARIS. My Lord Eumæus, 'twas your eldest son  
 That won the prize at Elis this last year.  
 I heard his dexterous handling much applauded.

EUM. 'Twill be a fresh leaf in the stripling's garland,  
 Your Highness minding on't.



ARIS. Well, what says Sparta?

ALC. Unto Messenia's King, Sparta sends health;  
And if he wills it, peace.

ARIS. If 'tis a peace  
Messenia can receive, the King accepts it;  
Rejoiced to stay the wanton waste of blood,  
That rather should distil in wholesome moisture  
From lusty peasant's brows, than flow from gashes,  
To shrink his veins, and die the green earth red.  
Shew us your articles.

ALC. They're briefly these:  
That you restore Taygetus, and the lands;  
And cease, henceforth, to sacrifice at Limnæ.

ARIS. My answer be as brief: We keep Taygetus;  
Or will exchange it with you for Amphæa.  
The last condition we reject entire.

ALC. My Lord, our articles are perempt'ry;  
We have no licence to retract.

ARIS. Here, then,  
Break we off. Never shall Messenia purchase  
A peace with shame.

EUM. Ere you reject the peace,  
'Twere well, my Lord, you reckon up your means  
To feed the war.

ARIS. We will not pause to count;  
Nor ever look dishonour in the face.  
For war, we are as well caparisoned  
As Sparta; not more drained of blood, our veins;  
And for our coffers, 'twere a curious balance  
Should shew the lightest.

ALC. Messenia's King is then for war?

ARIS. Not so:  
Messenia's King's for peace—if 't be a just one;

No other'll hold. In proof, we'll let go something:  
Sparta shall have the lands; but for the rest,  
We're stable as the rooted earth. How say you?

(*Enter CREONTES, who gives ALCANDER a scroll.*)

ALC. Here comes one, most like, can answer.

(*Reads the scroll.*) My Lord,

'Tis better than I hoped; we are allowed  
To loose this point you stick at: so *that* holds.

ARIS. 'Tis well advised; and nothing now remains,  
But bind the contract firm. Each will get time  
To breathe; and learn to think for better uses  
Men may be born, than rend their mother earth  
For steel, to hurl at one another's breasts,  
Like angry fiends. (*A scream heard.*) What cry  
is that?

(*Enter hastily LAODAMIA, followed by LUCIA and  
PHOCIA.*)

## SCENE V.

LAO. (*To LUCIA*) Shew me the man!

LUC. (*Pointing to CREONTES*) That's he. Ask him;  
you'll find

I tell you true.

ARIS. What new eruption's this?

Have you forsworn all government, that thus  
You break upon our state?

LAO. (*Looking fearfully at CREONTES*) I cannot ask.

He hath an aspect doth declare it true.

(*To CREONTES*) Speak not! Speak not! I'd die,  
and doubt it still.

ARIS. Shall I be answered? How? Am I the King?  
What brings you here in this disordered state?  
What man is this you stare on so? Or she?  
What trembling woman's that?

CRE. My Lord, may be 'twere best I speak myself;  
I have a tale to tell, that will, I hope,  
Attune my voice to such melodious music,  
As shall demand no grace. 'Tis sixteen years  
Or thereabouts, I think you lost a daughter.

ARIS. So long! Methought 'twas scarce as many months.

CRE. I know you *think* her dead, as all men do ——

ARIS. Well, Sir!

CRE. But that's not so; you've been deceived.

ARIS. (*Bewildered.*) I'm dreaming now!

Something like this has haunted me before.

CRE. Sir, 'tis no dream; but e'en the blessed truth.  
Your daughter lives.

LAO. Accurséd be the tongue  
That says it now, that had been blest t' have spoken  
So before!

ARIS. (*To CREONTES*) Let me touch you, Sir; my eyes  
And ears have so conspired against my sense,  
That 'tis my only test. I cannot tell—  
But if you'll hold to this, and make it true,  
You shall be King yourself!

CRE. Sir, I'll do that  
For less return. The lady Corysant——

ARIS. Ha! what of her? I do remember now  
She should have wed to-day. They say she's sick,  
And cannot do 't. How, madam, is she sick,  
And I not told on't? Who hath charge of her?  
That girl to me is dear as mine own blood.  
She has possessed the hollow void that gnawed

Me *here*, and somewhat eased the pain. If ill  
Befall her, look to't, you—you and your women—  
For I'll draw deep account. How fares she?

LAO.

Well.

ARIS. Why, that's good news.

LAO.

She's well, as those that feel

No ill—she's dead!

ARIS.

If you say that, and lie,

To plague me—as I think you do—I'll kneel  
Down at your feet, and bless you for't!—Stay,  
woman!

Hold yet—for if she's dead, I know the sickness  
That must have ended her. Be not o'er hasty  
T' impeach yourself—for now, by Lybian Jove!  
The breath that tells me Corysanda's dead,  
Shall be your last!

LAO.

She's dead. Strike now! for I

It was that killed her! (ARISTODEMUS *stabs her*)

I, that was her—mother!

(She falls dead.)

ARIS. (*Looking at the body*) She's gone; and with a  
lie upon her lips,

So monstrous, that if there were any here  
Could make it truth, as angry Jove did them  
That would have buried Niob's sons, he'd turn  
Us all to stone! I dare not lift my eyes  
To question with your visages—for voices  
I know you've not, to tell me she that's lying there  
Spoke true. (*Abruptly to CREONTES*) Pray, Sir—  
for you, it seems, are he  
That hold the clue to this most damnd mystery—  
Was Corysand my daughter?  
You do not speak, but cover up your face.

'Tis well ; for when on earth we play such horrors  
As all humanity excel,

Not featured to our parts, we needs must hide  
Our lineaments that cannot reach the passion !  
Now I see wherefore I so loved her. Destiny !  
Oh Destiny, implacable and cruel !

(To CREONTES) Good Sir, whilst yet I've comprehension left

To take it in, pray construe me this problem ;  
Which, now, I but conceive as men of Gods,  
Whose shafts they feel, but know not how they're sped.

CRE. Now all's past mending, fewest words are best.—  
When being besieged, and sorely pressed for food,  
You sent forth such as helped not the defence,  
We fell upon the fugitives — slew most —  
But one young child and aged man, I spared.  
That child was Corysand — and he that held it,  
With his last breath declared her royal lineage.

ARIS. Poor, good Admetus ! — Have you farther proof ?

CRE. Upon her breast a blazoned clasp she wore —

LUC. I brought it here to prove his words,—'tis this.

ARIS. (*Contemplates the clasp in silence — represses a convulsive sob — then speaks calmly*)

(To CREONTES) I thank you, Sir.

I'll see my daughter. — Gentlemen, the war  
Is at an end ; and they that live, disturbed  
No more by feverish dreams of night alarms,  
May smooth their pillows, now, for wholesome  
sleep. —

I, too, must seek my rest — and therefore leave  
you. —

Friends, good-night, all ! For this, that was my wife,

I pray you bear her to Althæa's tomb ;  
Where living she frequented most, being dead,  
There shall she lie. — Alas, poor wife ! we've played

It out but ill ! I did not think to end so,  
When we two courted i' the springy season  
Of our blest youth, whilst men looked on, and cried,

“ The Gods had matched us ! ” Aye ! Too well !  
too well !

For in the flame our mutual passions lit  
We have both perished ! [*Exeunt.*

SCENE VI. — *Torchlight—The Burying-place of the Royal Race—Double rows of Columns extending on each side, as far as the eye can reach—interspersed with Tombs, Statues, and Funereal Monuments—In the foreground, the Tomb of ALTHÆA, and on it is laid the Body of CORYSAND, covered by a Veil.*

(*Enter ARISTODEMUS.*)

ARIS. From the death-chamber they have borne her forth,

And here, upon her sister's tomb, have stretched her.

That was well done.

We'll lift the sheet, and look upon her face. —

The air's so misty, that I scarce discern

The features. (*Takes a torch.*) I'd peruse them  
o'er and o'er,

Searching to find Damia and myself  
 Inscribed there. — Aye, the very stamp ! I see  
 It now, that could not see't before. But oft  
 In death, the features fix into the mould  
 That nature first designed, which changing life  
 Obscured. — They should have closed her eyes ;  
 they look

As she had died in pain : they that are poisoned,  
 Die so. She was most fair ; and now I see't,  
 Exceeding like her mother. I ne'er called her  
 Daughter, — nor kissed her rosy lips when they  
 Could kiss again. I'll do it now. (*Kisses her.*)  
 Alas !

'Tis but cold cheer ! — I'll call her Corysant !  
 Sweet child ! Brave girl ! Dost hear me, sweet-  
 heart ? — No. —

A sorry bridal we have made of it.  
 Thy marriage robe is but a winding sheet ;  
 Thy wreathéd altar but a marble tomb ;  
 A murdered sister is thy brideswoman ;  
 And for the sacrifice we've offered up,  
 A mother by a father slain ! Of horror  
 On horror heaped, consists thy dower ; and I,  
 The grand artificer of all this wo,  
 High-priest of blood and murder, bear the torch !  
 Full many a time, and at the dead of night,  
 Althæa's ghost hath brought me here ! Anon,  
 Transporting me in sleep ; till o' the sudden,  
 Starting and bathed in fear, I woke ; and like  
 The guilty murderer that I am, crouched back  
 To mine own lair. Sometimes, she'd draw the  
 curtain

Where listening the silent air I lay,

With eyes that stared on darkness ;  
 And with a lifting of the brow, and gently  
 Waving, she lured me forth—compelled, but loath-  
 ing

T'obey. But now, methinks, appeased, she rests ;  
 Knowing as spirits that have shifted off  
 Their earth—that all's fulfilled—

*(Voices heard chanting—)*

Bear her gently ;  
 Do not weep !  
 Whisper softly ;  
 Let her sleep !

Hark ! 'Tis my Laodamia's dirge ! She comes  
 To take her place amongst us—we of the tomb ;  
 'Tis the last guest we wait for.

*(Voices chant again—)*

A mournful mother,  
 Murdered wife ;  
 She paid her passion  
 With her life.

Come on, dear wife !  
 Our broils and quarrels o'er, we're friends at last,  
 And step like new-joined lovers to their rest,  
 Here hand in hand to our's. — My heart grows  
 light,  
 And now I could be jovial ; for this death,  
 That in perspective looks so grim, seen near,  
 Allures me so, that as a bridegroom stands  
 Elate, considering the couch that bears  
 His love, so pause I to contemplate mine.  
 For there I shall be mated with repose ;  
 Lie on her quiet breast—sleep in her arms ;



And wrapt about she'll hold me so entranced,  
 Nor morning's dawn, nor hum of busy noon,  
 Nor women's cries, nor clang of arms, nor trump  
 Of victory, nor e'en the loudest shouts  
 Of the inconstant multitude, shall e'er  
 Awake me more! — Now, honest sword, come  
 forth!

Thou'st served me well ere this; and one last act  
 Of fealty done, thou shalt have leave to slumber  
 In thy scabbard, till rust hath eaten thee,  
 As worms shall do thy master.—  
 Bright sun of Greece, farewell! Shine on, shine  
 on,

When I am dark, and light my troops to conquest!  
 And thou too, world, I know not what I felt  
 When first thou greetedst me, a new-born stranger  
 To thy changed face,—but this I know, acquaint-  
 ance

Hath failed to make us friends; and that thy fel-  
 lowship

I quit with more content

Than e'en thy fondest smiles have ever lent me.

Good sword! thou'st sought out many a Spartan  
 heart,

Now find the way to mine!

*(Stabs himself, and dies.)*

*(During the conclusion of this Scene, the Procession, bearing the Corpse of LAODAMIA, is seen winding amongst the Pillars in the Distance. It gradually approaches, and the Curtain falls slowly, whilst the following Dirge is chanted:—)*

**Laodamia's Dirge.**

Bear her gently,  
Do not weep!  
Whisper softly;  
Let her sleep!

A mournful mother,  
Murdered wife;  
She paid her passion  
With her life.

Bear her gently,  
Do not weep!  
Her warfare's ended;  
Let her sleep!

With herbs and simples  
Strew the way,  
That no bad spirits  
Touch her clay!

Give her bread,  
And give her honey;  
'Twixt her white lips  
Place the money!

With purple flowers  
And white, prepare  
A chaplet meet  
To bind her hair!

We'll lay her head  
Towards the west,  
And place the parsley  
On her breast.

We'll bear her to  
Althæa's tomb ;  
Betwixt her children  
She'll find room.

Another soon  
We know 'll lie there ;  
'Tis Hades' will —  
His bed prepare !

Lay her down ;  
But leave a place —  
A Kingly crown  
Shall fill the space.

She'll sleep upon  
A marble bed,  
Tho' down could never  
Rest her head.

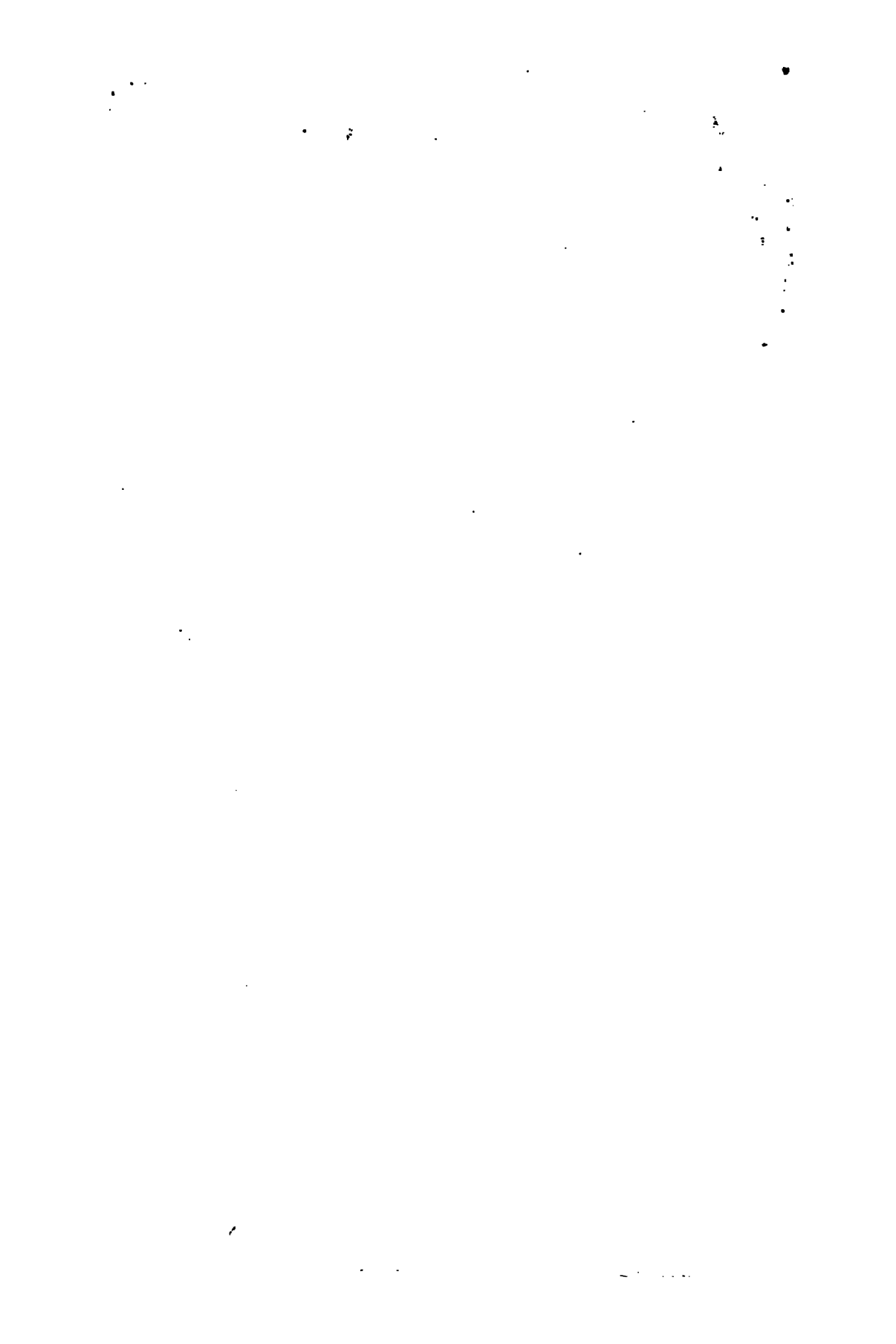
Bear her gently,  
Do not weep !  
Her warfare's ended,  
Let her sleep !

THE END.

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\* \* Should this Tragedy be represented, the last Scene would probably require to be considerably curtailed, which might be done without inconvenience.















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